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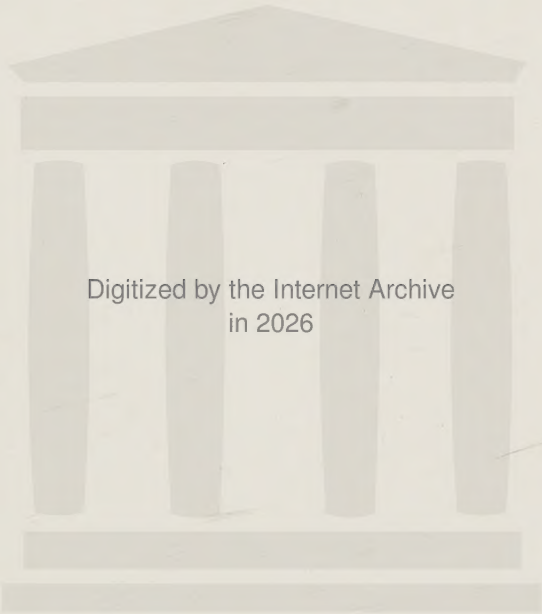
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UNIVERSALISM

A

PRACTICAL POWER:

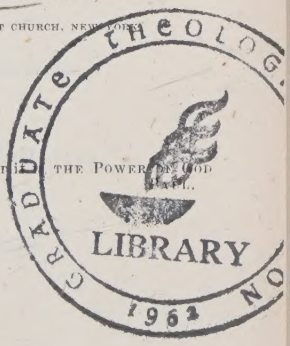
EXHIBITED IN A

Series of Discourses.

BY

ELBRIDGE GERRY BROOKS,

MINISTER OF THE TWENTIETH STREET UNIVERSALIST CHURCH, NEW YORK.



"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION, to every one that believeth."

CINCINNATI:

WILLIAMSON & CANTWELL,

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TO

My Father and Mother:

TO WHOSE EARLY TOILS AND SACRIFICES I OWE SO MUCH; BY WHOM I WAS TRAINED TO BELIEVE AND LOVE

UNIVERSALISM AS THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST;

AND

WHO YET SURVIVE,

IN THE SERENE EVENING OF UNBLEMISHED LIVES,

TO EXPERIENCE ITS BLESSINGS AND ILLUSTRATE ITS WORTH,

THIS ATTEMPT

TO VINDICATE ITS CLAIMS TO CONFIDENCE

AS

"The Power of God unto Salvation,"

IS

GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED.

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PREFACE.

As long ago as 1846, in Lowell, Mass., I gave a series of Sermons on the Practical Superiority of Universalism. These were the crude germs of this volume. In the winter of 1858–9, better informed and more mature in thought and opinion, I went more thoroughly over the same ground, with my people in Lynn, Mass. And during the past winter, responding to the spirit of inquiry seemingly awakened by several "Reviews," which I gave of Lectures professedly against Universalism, I still further wrought over the material, and preached these Discourses in my Church, in this city. I was, each time, advised to publish the Sermons, as they were previously given; but I have been more importunately solicited to put them into a book, since they were last delivered. It is, mainly, in compliance with requests thus urged, that they are now published.

I will not disguise that I think such a book seriously needed. We have numerous expository and controversial works; and Bro. Thayer's admirable volume has supplied what has long been a desideratum among us—a clear and systematic presentation of the "*Theology of Universalism.*" But we have no work specially discussing Universalism as a Spiritual Power, or setting forth its claims on purely practical grounds. This is the purpose of this volume. Its method, so far as I know, is peculiar to itself. I offer it, however, not as doing all that might be done with the subject,—only as an approximate treatment of it, presenting, I trust, a little gold from the mine of thought it opens, to incite others to dig still richer treasures from it.

Critics will find here no attempt at fine writing. While I trust that the discourses are not seriously open to literary objection, it is but just that I should say, that they were prepared with less thought of rhetoric than of doctrine—with the single purpose of convincing and moving the people before me. I did not stop to cull phrases, therefore, except to say what I had to say as intelligibly and forcibly as possible. I might have re-written the Discourses into Essays. But I preferred to sacrifice what would thus have been gained in compactness and literary finish, for the sake of retaining the freedom of treatment and the directness of popular address

which belong to the sermon. I hope the book will prove none the less acceptable, or useful, on this account.

With these explanatory words, I commend the volume to the blessing of God, and send it forth on its errand. In doing so, I claim the right to be heard as one who speaks of what he knows. I am no stranger to Universalism, or its influence. It was my good fortune to be born of Universalist parents. I was educated a Universalist. At a very early age—far too early—I began to preach Universalism, and have preached it now for more than a quarter of a century. I have thus always moved inside the circle of Universalist associations, and amidst opportunities to know what Universalism is, not only as a doctrine, but as a life. At the same time, I have had large opportunities of intercourse with those not Universalists, and thus of comparing Universalism and so-called Evangelical Christianity in their practical expressions. I have always been a student of men and of life, more than of books. This volume gives the result alike of my thought, my observation, and my experience. I ask for it the hearing to which it is thus entitled. I have no disposition to deny that there are far too many calling themselves Universalists, who, failing to appreciate Universalism, fail to honor it in the type of religious character which it enjoins. But I know, also, that not only has Universalism the superior fitness to produce the highest order of life, by virtue of its principles and motives, as these Discourses undertake to show, but that there are those who *understand* and *feel* what it is, to whom it can point and demand acceptance, not alone on the ground of Reason and the Scriptures, but according to the Master's criterion, "The tree is known by its fruit." My highest ambition would be fulfilled should this book help to increase the number of such; and my devout prayer is, that it may be so read as to be a humble means to this end—converting many now in doubt, or unbelief, and quickening others now professing to believe, to such a vital and experimental faith in Christ as the Saviour of all, as shall fill them with his joy, and make their lives, like his, rich in "the beauty of Holiness."

New York, *June* 4, 1863.

UNIVERSALISM A PRACTICAL POWER.

I.

Universalism as a Doctrine: If true, why preach it?

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."—Titus ii. 11–14.

There are three methods of argument in respect to Religious Doctrines:—the Rational, the Moral, and the Scriptural. Each of these has its special importance; but no doctrine can be most thoroughly demonstrated to be true except by the concurrence of them all.

The Moral Argument — an appeal to which this series of Sermons proposes — has its force in the instinctive conviction of all intelligent minds,—*First*, That no doctrine can be true which clearly violates, or conflicts with, any principle of moral right; and, *Second*, That every moral or religious truth must be healthy and sanctifying in its nature. On the basis of this instinctive conviction, it is, by common consent, admitted theoretically, though unfortunately not so widely, in fact, that all doctrines unmistakably in-

volving an infraction of moral right must be false, and that the doctrine of which the best moral influence can be affirmed carries with it, so far, the demonstration that it is the truth of God.

On account of the force which this argument, often unconsciously, has among the people, Universalism has widely suffered, because of the very general idea that it is morally lax and inefficient, if not absolutely licentious. Every benevolent mind is compelled to confess it a pleasing doctrine in the result it affirms, and to concede that no one with any measure of the spirit of Christ can fail to wish it true. But the general estimate as to what is required to give efficiency to motives has been so perverted, and Universalism has been so systematically and persistently misrepresented, that, without any investigation into the actual facts or principles in the case, the conclusion has been assumed, that, denying endless misery, the doctrine must, of course, be wanting in moral power, and, of course, therefore, false. This idea of the moral inefficiency of Universalism is the chronic and almost universal misapprehension concerning it. Theoretically, it is pretty—the thought is; but, morally, one perils every thing in believing it. Could all the facts be known, more would unquestionably be found deterred from believing or inquiring concerning the doctrine, by their misconceptions and fears on this point, than by any other cause.

Nor is this all. Looking among those professing to believe Universalism, we shall find no small number, unfortunately, who, educated in the prevalent theology,

or accustomed only to the traditional estimate of motives and moral appeals, apprehend the doctrine simply as a theory, and not as an inspiration or a law. Of course, they fail to perceive its moral meaning, or its quickening purpose and power. Even more than its non-believers, therefore, such need instruction concerning these things, since, professing Universalism, they only misrepresent it, in their smattering of knowledge, or their moral insensibility, and so help to confirm, instead of aiding to correct, the chronic misapprehension of those who reject it.

For the benefit both of its believers and of its non-believers, then, this subject of the significance of Universalism as a Practical Power needs to be discussed. Those who reject or hesitate to believe the doctrine on the ground of its moral laxity or licentiousness, reach the only conclusion possible, *reasoning on this assumption* and from their data. I blame nobody, thus reasoning, for rejecting Universalism. It is one's duty to reject it. I should reject it myself, reasoning from such a premise, in a similar ignorance of the facts. I only blame them for taking this assumption so unconcernedly, and often so persistently, and even insultingly, for granted, without any attempt to inform themselves as to the facts; and it is only required that they shall see how entirely the facts are against their assumption, and how completely the advantage on this score of moral power is *with* Universalism and *against* the theology it would displace, in order that they shall accept and advocate it as earnestly as they now oppose it. And in respect to those

who call themselves Universalists, without a becoming appreciation of what this word UNIVERSALISM morally and spiritually implies, it is enough now to say that, if they could but have their eyes opened and their hearts moved, so as to see and feel the realities of being as this faith of ours reveals and enforces them, they would speedily exhibit a type of character which would show, beyond all cavil, that this faith is indeed "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

It is in view of these considerations that I have been induced to enter upon the Discourses now proposed. The object is twofold: *First*, To exhibit the leading doctrines of Christianity according to our Universalist interpretation of them, in contrast with the prevalent doctrines on these points—thus showing *what Universalism really is* in its several parts, as a system of Christian truth; *Second*, To set forth the superior worth and efficacy of these doctrines, thus understood, as incentives to the Christian Life, and therefore as elements of quickening and regenerative power.

I need not tell you that I undertake this work, hoping to do good. Those who are already Universalists, who may listen to me, and especially the younger members of my own congregation, I hope to help to a clearer understanding of what Universalism is, or, if they do not need this, to a profounder sense of the motives it supplies and the obligations it imposes; and if I shall be fortunate enough to secure the continued and candid attention of any who are thinking it false, I hope I may be able to help them not only to a more intelligent

idea of what it is, but to the assured conviction that it is God's truth, or, at least, that it is not the irrational and corrupting enemy of souls the prejudiced and ill-informed assume and declare.

A single word more. These Discourses are practical, and not controversial, in their primary design. I shall arraign other doctrines only so far as it may be necessary to show the practical superiority of Universalism in contrast. Of course, I shall be compelled to speak of evangelical doctrines, so-called, to this extent; but desiring to secure a candid hearing from those who differ from us, I shall try to speak in a candid spirit, and shall say nothing to give them any just occasion of offence. If I shall seem at any time to hold their opinions in too light esteem, it will be from no want of respect for those who entertain them—only because I deem them false. If I shall seem to claim too much for my own opinions, it will be in no spirit of arrogance, or assumed infallibility—only because I believe them to be most essential truths. May God help me to speak only right things, and so give me hearing ears and receptive hearts and applying consciences to speak to, and so follow the whole labor with His blessing, that it shall aid us all to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Our text is a clear statement of the essence of Christianity as a doctrine, and of the purpose for which it was announced. The burden of the Gospel is REDEMPTION; and the text gives us the essence of Christianity as a doctrine, because it so sums up for us all the in-

structions of the Gospel concerning this great theme. As it now reads, indeed, in an unwarranted transposition of the Apostle's words, it affirms what was not true when he wrote, and what is not true even now, viz., that the grace of God which bringeth salvation *hath appeared to all men;* but as it reads in the margin, and as commentators of all denominations are generally agreed it should read, viz., "For *the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men* hath appeared," defining the salvation thus brought for us, in the closing statement, that Christ "gave himself for us *that he might redeem us from all iniquity*," it clearly tells us *that God has manifested His grace in Christ for the salvation of all mankind from sin.* It thus summarily tells us, you perceive, what redemption is,—what is the origin of this system of means to effect it,—who Christ is as the agent to accomplish it, and what is the number of those to be included in this redeeming work. And when these questions are all answered, what is there of essential importance in Christianity as a doctrine, that is not thus announced?

And in thus stating the essence of CHRISTIANITY as a doctrine, the text gives us the best possible statement of the essence of Universalism as a doctrine, distinctly showing that Universalism *is* Christianity in its uncorrupted form. Christianity, according to the text, is the doctrine of God's universal grace. *And this is what Universalism is.* As you are aware, it has sometimes been designated as the doctrine of God's impartial and efficient grace; and in general terms, it cannot be better described. *What interpretation of the doc-*

trines of the New Testament, except Universalism, so preserves a correspondence to the terms of the text that it can be thus designated? Amidst sects and doctrines, this is our peculiarity—this only : that we march under a banner on which the text is written as the exposition of our faith, and that we thus cling to and honor the Cross as the symbol of a love that embraces the world, and of a power that shall yet attract our whole race to itself.

Under the broad name of *Universalism*, indeed, we hold a general system, the various details of which it will be the purpose of succeeding discourses to illustrate and commend to your confidence ; but in general terms, *this* is Universalism as a doctrine—the doctrine that God reigns ; that His grace has manifested itself in Christ for the salvation of all men ; and that Christianity shall not prove a failure. It is simply the doctrine of the universality and supremacy of God's love ; of the efficiency and sufficiency of Christ's truth and cross ; of man's indestructible accountability ; and of the certain ultimate triumph of righteousness in the redemption of souls. I might ask those of you who do not believe Universalism, if you see any thing in such a doctrine so offensive to a Christian conscience, or so unfavorable to piety, as Universalism is commonly represented. But I will not stop here for this. It is enough now to say that this is Universalism—the doctrine that holds up the Bible as the word of God, and says, *This* teaches that, in His sovereignty of Love, God is mightier than all the forces of evil, and that it hath pleased Him that in Christ should all fulness

dwell, that by him, in the omnipotence of His grace, He might reconcile all things unto Himself. Whoever believes *this*, on whatever grounds of argument, or through whatever processes the conclusion may be reached, holds Universalism in its essentials as a doctrine, and in whatever church he worships, or whatever else he may believe, is, to this extent, a Universalist.

And this being Universalism as a doctrine, the question is—a question asked contemptuously by some, but asked honestly by many others—*If the doctrine is true, what is the use of preaching it?* In reply to this question, it would be enough to say that we preach it *because it is true*, holding that it is *the truth* and not *error* that God would have us preach. Or, we might say that we preach it because the Church and the world are so needing its light, and because souls are so yearning for the relief which it alone can give: and in proof, I might remind you of these questions that so throng upon us amidst the sin and sorrow of the world, as we stand above our dead, or confront the mysteries of being, and then show you the contrast between Universalism, as an answer to these questions, and all the theories with which the prevalent theology essays to minister to the cravings of the mind and the hungerings of the heart for satisfaction concerning them. I might bring before you those who have earnestly and honestly believed this theology,—who *do* earnestly and honestly believe it, and who have been compelled to confess that they have wrestled with these questions, only to find themselves wrestling with them in vain;—that they have yearned for light, only to find them-

selves groping in darkness;—that they have writhed and agonized in their prayers for peace, only, in the extremity of their distress, to find every thing like peace denied them. I might place upon the witness-stand, here before you, Albert Barnes, one of the most distinguished ministers of this theology, who says, "My whole soul pants for light and relief on these questions; but . . . in the distress and anguish of my spirit, I confess that I see no light whatever. I have never seen a particle of light on these subjects that has given a moment's ease to my tortured mind."* Nay, I might appeal to the deepest experience of every thoughtful man or woman to whom I am speaking, who believes this theology, and ask, Have *you* ever been able to be entirely *satisfied* with what your faith tells you? As you have looked upon your dead,—as you have bowed beneath the burden of some great sorrow,—as you have looked yonder, and thought of eternity and of what to you are its uncertainties, and of the horrible cloud of sin and suffering that, according to your faith, is to blacken it forever, have *you* never found yourself in the dark, wishing for more light?—have you never found your heart pained for a peace you could not get, or your eyes filled with tears that there was no hand to wipe away?—or, can you now, before God, put your hand upon your heart and say, My faith is all that I want; I ask nothing better?—And thus demonstrating how Universalism is needed as a solution of Life, and as the key that can alone unlock the mysteries of the universe, and so enable us to walk

* Practical Sermons,

calmly and trustfully amidst the shadows they cast about us, I should sufficiently show why, believing it true, we think it necessary to preach it.

But those who ask the question we are considering mean to ask, If all men are certainly to be saved, what is the use of preaching this or any other doctrine, or of doing any thing in the way of Christian labor?—and it is but fair that we should answer them according to their intention in putting the question. I reply, then, that we preach Universalism, believing that it is true as a prophecy, *as a means of making it true as a fact.* Those who urge this inquiry do so upon the assumption that Universalism teaches that all men are to be saved without regard to means or conditions. First of all, then, let it be understood that we believe no such thing; that we believe that God works by means, and that, in this as in every other department of His government, the end He designs and of which we are assured is certain, only because it is certain that the means He has appointed will be used, and that the conditions He has ordained will be complied with.

These friends of ours, who suppose that they convict us of an absurdity when they press us with the question we are considering, would think it very strange, and even very absurd, if some one, learning that they believe it certain that there will be a harvest next autumn, should ask them, What then is the use of ploughing, or planting? And their question seems just as strange, and I hope it will not be deemed disrespectful if I say, just as absurd even, to us. The harvest each year is

certain; but it is so only because it is certain that the ploughing and planting and all the work of the husbandman will be faithfully done. And so, the great Harvest of Humanity yonder, in which souls are to be ripened and gathered into the heavenly garner, is certain, we believe,—certain, thank God, beyond any of the contingencies or liabilities to failure inevitably incident to all the harvests of our earthly autumns, because the seed of truth can never perish, and no soul can be hopelessly blighted; but it is certain only because it is certain that the truth will be preached, and the attractions of the Cross exhibited, and all the means of converting and saving souls employed.

You remember Paul's shipwreck on his journey to Rome, (Acts xxvii.) and that he was positively assured that of all who were with him not one should perish; and yet, you remember that, when some of the sailors were about to abandon the vessel, he told the centurion in command that except they staid on board, the company could not be saved, and that subsequently they went to work and ran the vessel ashore. If those who ask, If Universalism be true, what is the use of preaching it? had been there, they would have gone to Paul, no doubt, and said, Why, man, what is the use of all this work? Has not God solemnly assured you that crew and passengers shall all be saved alive? and if all are to be saved, why insist that these sailors shall remain on board? or what is the use of hoisting the anchors, or employing any means to get ashore? But had any of the company thus queried with Paul, what, think you, would have been his reply? Would he not have

expressed his amazement at their folly, and have said, God has indeed told me that all these lives will be saved, and it is certain that they will be; but this certainty is based on the fact that we have common sense, and that we shall use the means necessary for our deliverance? Hence, he would have continued, we must keep these sailors on board to perform the work which they only can perform, and we must hoist our anchors and do whatever is required that we may save ourselves. And this is, in substance, precisely the answer he would give if he were here replying to those who ask, If all men are to be saved by the power of God's grace in Christ, what is the use of Christian preaching and Christian work? He would say, Because these are the very means appointed of God's grace in Christ for the salvation of the world. This, in effect, is what he did say, some of you may remember, writing on this subject to the Philippians (ii. 9–12): "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, (Christ,) and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here is the certainty of the great result of the salvation of all; but in view of it, and that the certainty may be fulfilled, he immediately adds, "*Wherefore*, my beloved, ... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," or with eager solicitude. This disposes of the whole subject. Christ came to redeem the world; and he preached redemp-

tion that he might redeem it. We are all to be saved; but we must believe and repent and work that we may be saved: and believing in the certainty of this result, we preach it and work for it, that *the result certainly prophesied* may become *the result actually verified.*

And here, I might rest, feeling that the question of the afternoon is sufficiently answered. But the topic is too important, and includes facts and considerations too vital in connection with the very essence of the Gospel, to be so cursorily disposed of; and leaving, for the moment, all thought of Universalism as such, let me ask you to turn to the Bible and see what is its testimony as to the purpose of Christianity in the world.

The assumption of the question before us is—not only that, if all men are to be saved, they are to be saved without regard to means or conditions, but that the sole ultimate purpose for which Christianity is to be preached in any form, is to save souls from a future endless hell; and the idea of the question is, that since Universalists, confessedly, do not preach for such a purpose, there can be no use in their preaching at all. But what says the Bible? I remarked, in entering upon our subject, not only that the text gives us the essence of Christianity as a doctrine, but that it explains also why it was announced. And what does it say? Mark the language: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, *teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this*

present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, *who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*" This, you perceive, is a complete exposition of the design of the entire system of God's grace in Christ; but, through the whole, you will observe nothing is said or hinted of hell, or of salvation from it. A preacher of so-called evangelical Christianity, writing to a pupil as Paul was writing to Titus, and defining the purpose of the Gospel and Gospel preaching, would be sure to say something about saving lost souls from perdition; but Paul evidently knew nothing of any such thing. The single purpose of Christ's mission, as *he* understood it, was to save us from sin—to "redeem us from all iniquity."

And, from first to last, this stands out on the face of the Scriptures as the work which Christ should come, or which he had come to do. Nor should we fail to note that it means a great deal as to the divine origin and authority of the Bible, that it has such a unity in this respect; that, the production of ages and of minds so dissimilar and so wide apart, it every where shows the golden thread of this essential purpose running through it, and chants the same anthem of redemption from the beginning to the end. How could this have been, except that the same directing Spirit presided over and inspired it all?

Going back to Eden, in connection with the first sin, we find Christ prophesied as its antagonist and

destroyer. "I will put enmity," God said to the serpent—the symbol of the principle of evil, "between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen. iii. 15.) And tracing the references to him down through the Old Testament, we discover that the spirit of this promise pervades all that is said concerning him, until, in the last book, and at the close of the prophetic age, we are told of his coming, and that he shall be "like *a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver;* and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, *that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.*" (Mal. iii. 2, 3.) Entering the New Testament, the first thing we read of him is that his name should be JESUS, because he should *save his people from their sins.* Standing by him as he commences his ministry, the first word we catch from his lips is *Reform;* and following him in his labors, we perceive that his constant effort is to wean men from sin, and to kindle their affections towards God and goodness. At last he dies. Why? The apostle tell us (2 Cor. v. 15): "He died for all, *that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.*" Immediately, the apostles take up the work for which our Lord had been training them; and you need not be reminded with what zeal and self-forgetfulness they preached, summoning men to faith and repentance in the name of a crucified and risen Redeemer. And what was the purpose for which they labored? Paul

answers for them all (Col. i. 28): "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, *that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*" Even the consolations of the Gospel, we are told, are provided for the same ultimate end: as Peter says (2 Pet. i. 4), "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, *that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*"

We are returned, then, to the text, with the lesson that its exposition of the purpose of God's grace in Christ is that which meets us every where in the Bible. Paul once said (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17), speaking of the Old Scriptures, that they are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, *that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;*" and in no better words can the one aim of God in all that He has given us in the Gospel be summed up. This is the essential fact in Christianity; and no one can understand Christianity who does not approach it in the apprehension of this fact, and thus understand that it is a revelation of God's love and truth for the moral culture and regeneration of our race. In a single word, its design is *to make men and women good.* The tendency of Christendom, unfortunately, has always been to overlook this fact. Christianity has been regarded either as *a device to appease God* rather than as *a power to save from sin*,—as *a means of rescue*, to *insure safety*, rather than as *a means of culture*,

quickening to holiness, or it has been discussed as a system of opinions, rather than applied as a vitalizing and constructive force. Hence, the disposition has been to *theorize* and *believe* rather than to *actualize* and *live* Christianity. Commonly, indeed, the whole system of grace has been regarded simply as an expedient for man's escape from penal fires in the future world. And even when this belief, in its gross form, has been rejected, there has still lingered the idea that it is, somehow, in reference to some great deliverance in the future that Christ and his truth have their most important meaning, and that, so far as they have relation to us here and now, they are rather designed to impart knowledge and give consolation than to become absolutely a sanctifying power in life. Herein has been the capital mistake of the Church.

Not that it is, in any sense, a mistake to think of the Gospel as a doctrinal message, addressed to our understandings. Great mischief has been done by those who have overlooked this fact, and denounced reason as having nothing to do with religion, insisting that Christianity is simply a matter of faith. Such are among the worst enemies of religion. The first business of Christianity is with the intellect. It does not come to us as fools, or as mere passive receivers. It is no bird of the night, that loves darkness rather than light. It is no poor superstition, that would smuggle itself into the citadel of mind when its guardians are asleep. It comes to us as intelligent beings. It wants to be challenged. It invites scrutiny. It demands thought. "Why even of yourselves judge ye

not what is right?" its question is. And while he who believes without looking after proofs, or interesting himself in the discussion of doctrines—believes the faith of his fathers, or that in which Christ is first commended to him, because his heart finds rest on the bosom of Jesus, is accepted and blessed, *he* is accounted the most acceptable disciple, who not only has the faith of the heart, but the faith of the head; who has thought most, and knows most, and best appreciates all the grounds of faith, and who, therefore, is the most intelligent disciple. But this address to the intellect is simply a *means*, and not an *end*. Through an enlightened intellect, Christianity aims to quicken conscience, and find its way down into the heart, clarifying and exalting the affections, and sanctifying the life. And only as this is done, no matter how clear or how strong the head-faith may be, or how skilfully arguments may be made or wielded,—in other words, only as the Gospel actually becomes a sanctifying power in souls, and a regenerating and elevating power in society, does it do its work, or demonstrate its chief worth as a religion for man.

We sometimes find persons disputing about what is called *Doctrinal Preaching;* some do not like it at all, and others like nothing so well. But, however tastes might differ, there could be no dispute among intelligent persons as to the importance of such preaching, if this relation of Christianity to the head and the heart were properly considered. As addressed to the intellect, Christianity is a doctrine, and cannot be preached except *as* a doctrine. As addressed to the

heart, it is a power, and should be so administered. But preached exclusively as a doctrine, it becomes simply a dogma, and not a power; while one who undertakes to administer it as a power, without preaching it as a doctrine, will find himself in the same case as an engineer who should undertake to impart force to his steam-engine without fire or water. Pope says, somewhere,

> "For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
> He can't be wrong whose life is in the right;"

and there are those who are particularly fond of quoting the couplet as expressing their idea of the worthlessness of doctrinal discussions. But, whatever this may be as poetry, it is very poor common-sense. As well might one say, It does not matter what kind of roots a tree has, if the tree only bears fruit; or, It does not matter what one eats, or whether one eats at all, if he only lives. None but a bigot, indeed, will say that there cannot be a good life where there is a wrong faith; but every person who knows anything of the philosophy of life will admit that the best life can be the result only of the best principles, appreciated and appropriated, and that, according as one's faith is right or wrong, the principles out of which his life is to grow are good or bad. If, then, it is worth while that one's life should be "in the right," it is equally worth while that his "form of faith" should be right, even though there must be sharp controversy to make it so.

But only on this account: and here we come back

again to the radical thought of the text. Doctrines are of no worth simply as doctrines. Only because out of Christian doctrines, appreciatingly believed, come Christian lives, are such doctrines of the slightest concern. Christianity is the power of God to awaken us intellectually and morally ;—to kindle our aspirations ; —to stir us to endeavor ;—to sicken us of what is mean and sinful ;—and to cause loftier ideals to hover before us, beckoning us onward, and animating us upward, through piety, purity, and charity, into an *ever-increasing* HOLINESS. *Therefore* what Christianity teaches is important. *Therefore*, and because there is no other name by which we can be saved, that is, no other means by which we can be effectually helped to the realization of our highest possible life, our Lord could say, "Without me, ye can do nothing." Except for this reason, the Bible is worth no more than the Koran, and one might as well believe anything else, or nothing, as to believe the doctrines of Christianity.

Thus, then, look where we will, or consider the subject as we may, we discover that it is not hell, nor any danger in which we stand of the fate this word is supposed to express, but *character*, to which constant and final regard is had in the Gospel :—that we may be made freer from selfishness and sin,—richer in affections towards God, and in affections and charities towards man,—more thoughtful of the oppressed,—more responsive to the needy,—more principled against all that is wrong,—more consecrated to all that is right.

Nor, it is important to observe, is it any singular or exceptional work to which Christianity has thus been

ordained. Christianity is only the culmination of a grand system of means by which God is seeking to make the world conscious of Him and loyal to Him. It is clothed with a higher power, but only with the same design. Even the material creation—"the things that are made," as the Apostle designates it, has its highest significance as a revelation of the "eternal power and godhead" of its Author, and as thus fitted to minister to faith, reverence, and purity in man. I cannot speak for you; but for myself, I find everywhere in God's works this ultimate design. Looking out upon this world, or into any department of the universe, amidst the grandeurs of which we are, physically, but so many atoms,—up to the heavens, bending the canopy of a great Love over us all,—out upon the ocean, throbbing always as if it were the heart of the globe,—upon whatever speaks of the power, wisdom, or love of the Creator, whether it be the sunshine or a storm,—the dew-drop or a mountain,—the buds of spring, the glories of summer, the harvests of autumn, or the snows of winter,—looking upon anything that tells me that I am in God's world and under God's care, I behold a moral purpose in it all. Every star rebukes earthliness and teaches aspiration. Every flower chides faithlessness and urges trust. Every sunbeam and every rain-drop preaches God's impartial care, and summons us to broad and generous affections. Every opening bud demands thoughtfulness; every gift of summer tells of beneficence; and every sere leaf reminds of death, and exhorts to fidelity. The world is a school. Every thing has its appeal and its lesson. And looking be-

yond the instructions thus furnished, we find that whenever, however, wherever God has spoken to the world, it has been for this same moral purpose. For this, He manifested himself to the patriarchs. For this, He spake through Moses and the prophets. For this, He has shown himself immanent in human affairs, in the demonstrations of His Providence; and for this, all history is full of voices, solemn and sometimes awful, proclaiming at once the reality and the inviolability of His law. So it is that God has everywhere made the moral interests of His children His paramount concern, and sought through every manifestation of Himself, crowned at length with the gift of His son, to nurture the elements of noble and exalted character in souls. Nor, let me say, is there anything that more impresses me with a sense of the divine origin and authority of Christianity, than the fact that it so comes into the line of this pervading moral purpose, and is so clearly a gift to complete the work in which creation, Providence, and all preceding dispensations have been assigned a part —the work of filling souls with the love of God and training them into harmony with Him.

And this, I come now finally to say, is precisely what we preach Universalism for—*this only:* as a means of moral power, in the conviction that there is no other force, or combination of principles, so potent for this end as Universalism, when it is understood and felt. First of all, indeed, we preach it to enlighten souls; to interpret what is otherwise mysterious; to assure the world of the beneficent meaning of life and of all its appointments and experiences; across all clouds, to

show the bow of divine mercy, and beyond all suffering and sorrow and sin, to disclose God's sublime Result. But this is only by the way. The one sole ultimate end for which we preach is, to show men God as a Father, Christ as a Saviour, and Heaven as a Home, that we may lead them to abhor and renounce all that is evil, and to live and love and work and pray as the children of God, the redeemed of the Lord and the heirs of Immortality.

And will any one of you tell me, now, for what greater or better end we *could* preach than this? Which is the nobler, think you—to labor to save men from hell, or to save them from sin? to preach to make them safe, or to make them pure and Christ-like? When you think of it, my friends, what work is so important, or so needed with respect to any of us, as this which God has so constantly had in view, and which we are humbly seeking to further? *Life:* ah! how little we realize what it is to live, and what grand and solemn meanings are included in this little word! We carry the elements of our weal or woe within us—all the possibilities of heaven or hell, and all the glories of immortality: and yet we are constantly looking away from our *life*, to things outside of ourselves for the things of our chief concern. While God is calling us to be noble and pure, and to grow large and blessed as souls, and has furnished us with all these helps and inspirations to make us so, we are living, too many of us, as if we were only bodies, and as if food and raiment and houses and lands and the perishable pleasures of the moment were all we can possess or enjoy!—satisfied to

grovel and feed on dust, instead of looking up, feeding on angels' food! And as if it were not enough that this mistake should be made with respect to this world, countless numbers are projecting it into eternity, and are reckoning it as their engrossing concern, in the discipleship of Christ, to get away from hell, instead of cleansing themselves from sin and trying to grow into a character in the likeness of the Redeemer! When will men and women be wise in this thing? Especially, amidst all that God has done to educate us as souls, and to incite us to the effort to be true to ourselves and to Him—in presence, above all, of the Life and Cross of Christ, when will Christians learn this one lesson—that, whether in this world or any other, alike in time and eternity, Life is more than meat; that righteous character is more than all external things; and that whoever preaches, or in any way labors, to rectify and Christianize character, toils for the noblest of all possible ends? To be awakened to a consciousness of God and of ourselves and of divine relationships,—to be filled with faith and love and moral power,—to be inspired with a sense of duty,—to be made superior to sin, and thoroughly loyal to our highest possibilities, in the purpose to be, as far as we may, through Christ, like God,—what, if Religion be not a dream and the Cross a lie, if there be a God, and we are souls, destined to live forever, what so much as *this* do we need ourselves?—to what so much as *this* do we need to help others?

And when we consider what we ourselves are, and look out into the world—on its errors and sins, on its

low, false estimates of life, and the mean and empty pursuits which so occupy mankind, on the giant wrongs that are casting their shadows across the face of humanity, and the cancerous evils that are eating into its vitals, what a sublime conception it gives us of the mission of Christ, to think that this work of inspiration, ennoblement, and sanctification, not only for us, but for all men, is the work with which he has been charged, and which he is yet to accomplish as the Saviour of the world! This is not the purpose for which he has been mainly preached; but those who have preached his name have "builded better than they knew." In spite of their misconceptions and errors, his name and his Cross have become the efficient forces in a regeneration they have not contemplated; and thus this—*the very work for which, as Universalists, we preach Christ today*—has been the work which he has been doing ever since he has been preached at all. What a power he has thus been! Look behind us, over the fields he has illumined with his ministry through these last eighteen hundred years. See how many souls he has not only instructed and comforted, but quickened into newness of life. See how many social wrongs and how many hoary evils and abuses he has caused the world to outgrow and cast aside. And every soul thus enlarged, purified, and lifted up, every public or private wrong conquered and destroyed, only serves to show us his sufficiency for the work assigned him, and, illustrating the purpose for which we preach Universalism, becomes the pledge and prophecy of the world's complete redemption.

Let us thank God that a Gospel has been given us contemplating such a stupendous end, and equal to it; that not only is Christianity clothed with a moral meaning, like every thing else, but that He has made it, as nothing else is, the efficient instrument of His power to save from sin; and that, therefore, it shall continue to work on—working more mightily as it becomes better understood, converting and regenerating souls and rectifying wrongs, until, at length, the hour shall come, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

And rejoicing in the assurance that in this suspected or despised Universalism, we have the Gospel, which, under God, is thus to be the instrument for saving the world, let us see more clearly why we need to proclaim it, and especially why we need to live it. Are there those here, who have hitherto asked, "If Universalism be true, what is the use of preaching it?" Let me ask them to see, in the light of what I have now submitted, what Universalism is, and why it should be preached, and to enlist henceforth among those who, believing it, are heartily laboring for it. But most of all, let those of us who accept this truth, see and never fail to feel our responsibility as those charged with so precious a trust, and understand that, reasonable, beautiful, comforting, as it is, it is in neither of these directions that we are to see its chief purpose, or the cause for our labor, but in its design to sanctify life and conform souls into the image of Christ. Seeking, therefore, to experience more and more of its saving power in the sanctifica-

tion of *our* lives, let us prove ourselves not believers only, but workers, also. Thus may we be numbered among those in whom the truth is honored,—by whom it is served,—and through whom it is so expressed as to be helped forward to its triumph, in the destruction of sin and the redemption of the race.

II.

God.

"To us, there is but one God, the Father."—1 Cor. viii. 6.

All religion begins with God: and the numerous forms of religion are but so many expressions of the intuitive idea of a God common to all souls, modified according to the moral and intellectual development and the degree of the light of Revelation, which an individual or a people may have attained.

The *doctrinal* importance of just views of God is apparent. Lying at the root of all religious forms and opinions, as this idea of a God does, our conceptions concerning Him must inevitably stretch by their spirit, or by the conclusions they necessitate, into all that grows out of, or that is in any way connected with them. Speaking of the subject in its last analysis, indeed, there is, doctrinally, nothing in any system of religion *but* views of the Divine character and government. Religion, theoretically, is simply the science of God and of human relations and obligations to Him. Each of its alleged truths is but a statement concerning some phase of the Divine attributes, some manifestation of the Divine nature, some department of the Divine government: and this being so, it is easily seen how necessarily our ideas of God must

not only affect, but determine all our other religious ideas.

The present discourse is based upon the fact that the *practical* connections and consequences of one's ideas of God are no less certain or important;—that *character* must as inevitably be affected by them as *opinions*, if there be any positiveness or vitality in one's faith. *Why* it is so, we will not here stop to consider, since this will sufficiently appear in the progress of our discussion. It is enough now that we have the fact; and on the basis thus furnished, we will proceed at once to see what the Universalist doctrine of God is, and what are some of the considerations which attest for it the superiority we affirm.

And as Universalists, it is our privilege to say that the Apostle, giving us the idea of God as revealed in Christ, exactly expresses, in the text, our doctrine concerning Him, without necessity of addition or explanation. "*To us, there is but one God, the Father.*" In no other words can our faith on this fundamental point be so well stated. *What believer of the so-called evangelical theory of God can say as much?*

I. In reference to *the Unity of God*, the text exactly expresses the doctrine we hold. This is the first point of difference between Universalism and the traditional theology. Our friends who hold the latter say that God is three distinct and independent persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; that each of these persons has his absolute individuality and different offices in the Godhead, sustaining, by vir-

tue of these offices, different relations to man; and yet, that these three persons are but one: and in the impossible Unity of this Trinity, they see their one God. We take up the language of the apostle, and say that God is one, and "but one," in the exact and mathematical meaning of the word; and unlike our Trinitarian friends, when we hear this apostolic statement, or that older proclamation, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord," we have no necessity to interpose with incomprehensible distinctions to show in what sense it is to be understood; in all senses, it is true to us; and the undivided and absolute unity of God is as much a fact to us as His existence itself.

Formerly, there were Universalists who were Trinitarians. All the early Universalists of this country, represented by Murray, and afterwards by Rev. Mr. Mitchell, of this city, were Trinitarians; and no doubt there are vast numbers, scattered through all the churches of the various denominations, who are Universalists in the acceptance of our distinguishing doctrine of the ultimate reconciliation of all souls to God, but who still adhere to the Trinity, as well as to other so-called orthodox opinions. But Universalism, as a distinct system, altogether discards the dogma. We pronounce it a relic of philosophical and heathen speculations, without the shadow of a warrant in Christianity—as foreign to the Scriptures as it is unreasonable, contradictory, and mathematically impossible in itself: and we claim the practical advantage for Universalism on this account.

This subject, you are aware, is commonly regarded as

important, chiefly, if not exclusively, in its mere doctrinal connections; but it is time that it should be understood that it has moral relations quite as important, in consequence of which the doctrine of the strict unity of God is as superior as a practical force as it is as a doctrinal theory. The advantage in this particular, however, is not peculiar to us denominationally, and I will not, therefore, take time to go so elaborately into the subject as I otherwise might. Suffice it to say that if devotion, lifting the soul into communion with God, has any office in Christian culture—as no intelligent person will deny—then, whatever divides the attention and confuses the thoughts, so hindering the concentration of our homage upon one infinite object, and scattering it among several such objects, being unfavorable to the undivided communion of the heart with God, must, to the same extent, interfere with the work of devotion and prove so far unfavorable to character. Hence, the doctrine of the Divine Unity is more favorable to piety, and to that refining and elevating work on character which only piety can effect, because, to use the thought of Dr. Channing, "it presents to the mind and heart one, and only one, Infinite Person to whom homage is to be paid. It does not weaken by dividing the energy of religious sentiment. It collects and concentrates the soul on one Father, of unbounded, undivided, unrivalled glory. Around Him, it gathers all the splendors of the universe. To Him, it teaches us to ascribe whatever good we receive or behold." And the soul, we may add, thus led into the presence of one God, to whom it may wholly yield itself, and

on whom it may, without distraction or reserve, take hold as the single focus of its thoughts and affections, can worship, and does worship, in a unity and intensity of devotion possible only to those who thus render their adoration.

It was the declaration of our Lord, concerning another subject, that "no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other." The remark would have been equally true if he had said *three* instead of *two*—and the principle affirmed applies to *three* objects of worship with all the force with which it could apply to any number of human claimants of service. A river, to be deepest and strongest, must flow in one channel. So with our worship; and diverted into more than one channel, it must lose, if not in aggregate amount, certainly in singleness, in intensity, and in power. "The Trinitarian, indeed, professes to believe in one God," to cite Dr. Channing again, "and he means to hold fast this truth. But three persons, having distinctive qualities and relations,—of whom one is the Sender, and another the Sent,—of whom one is the Giver, and another given,—of whom one intercedes, and another hears the intercession,—of whom one takes flesh, and another never becomes incarnate,—of whom one is the Father, and another the Son, and another neither—three persons, thus discriminated, whatever the creed may say, are as truly three distinct objects to the mind as if they were acknowledged to be three separate divinities; and from the very constitution of our nature, they cannot

so occupy the mind, or so be the focus of attention, or so deeply or powerfully act on the heart as one Infinite Person, to whose sole goodness all gifts and all happiness are to be ascribed. Devotion must be distracted by the equal and rival claims of the Three, and the worship and the whole life-service of the conscientious Christian must be more or less disturbed by the apprehension that his due proportion of homage may be withheld from one or another of them."

If I am speaking to a single person, who has ever tried to be a devout worshipper of God as a believer in the Trinity, may I not appeal to you, my brother or sister, to bear witness to the correctness of this statement? Have there not been times when you have been confused and perplexed in your devotions,—when you have found your thoughts divided between the Father and the Son especially, giving homage now to one and then to the other, and so impairing, if not destroying, the unity and highest effect of your prayers or your worship? Necessarily, it must be so, even though one may not be really conscious of it. "It is only as we rise into the perception of the strict unity of God, that all the emotions of piety and all the affections of the soul flow easily and naturally together, and, concentrated on one God, become condensed into one thought, one love, one devout and holy life."*

Were there nothing else, then, we could on this account claim the Practical Superiority for our doctrine

* The thought of the several passages in this connection marked as quoted, belongs to Dr. Channing's New York Dedication Sermon, though the phraseology is somewhat changed.

of God, and thus fortify the rational and scriptural, by an unanswerable moral argument for it.

II. But the chief point in our doctrine of the Divine Existence, and that of which we specially affirm its superiority as a Practical Power, *is the moral character of God.* "To us," says the Apostle in the text, "there is but one God, *the Father.*" And this is what we say. "THE FATHER:" this is the one word, we believe, in which the Gospel has summed up all the sublimest and most precious truths concerning God, and revealed to us the essence of His glory. The question as to the mode of the Divine existence, whether God is one or three, has its importance, as we have seen, and should never be treated as of small concern; but that into which is crowded all that is of most interest to us, and in comparison with which all other questions are utterly without consequence, is, Who is God? and what is He in His relations and feelings towards us? There are speculations as to where God is, and how He exists, and through what medium He acts in His control of the universe, in which some persons are fond of indulging, which are none of our concern. By the limitations of our very nature, we are incapable of comprehending the solution of such inquiries, precisely for the same reason that a drop cannot contain the ocean. But *who* God is, and *what* He is in his relations and the spirit of His government toward us, we can understand; and these are inquiries which it is not only entirely legitimate for us to raise, but which, before all others, it is essential for us to answer.

Believing in a God, indeed, we cannot look abroad upon the vastness and grandeur of His universe, and doubt His power. Every star that circles through the pathless space, the minutest insect or flower-leaf He has made, our own marvellous frames, and all the wonderful adjustments and provisions of His creation tell us that He is wise. And walking any where amidst His works, observing the aim and purpose of His appointments, we can never lack for voices to assure us that He is good. But how good is He, and what is He really to us? Is He simply a Sovereign, ruling us only as subjects, or is He our Father, dealing with us as His children? Has He put us here, and then withdrawn into the seclusion of His infinite solitude, or to busy himself elsewhere with interests more important, or is He still present with us, watching over and caring for us? Is He good to a few, or alike good to all?—good for a season, to change, by and by, into indifference, or malignity, or good unalterably and for ever, with all the resources of His infinite wisdom and power pledged to our welfare? May we trust in Him unreservedly, or must we fear and tremble before Him in apprehension of His displeasure? *These* are the questions which every thoughtful person finds himself or herself instinctively asking concerning God, and the favorable answer of which is the first condition of the soul's peace. Answer them thus favorably, and it is worth while for us to debate about the Trinity, or any other incidental question pertaining to the subject. But answer them unfavorably, and it matters not a straw to us whether He be three or one, or

whether any thing else be true or false concerning Him. We may say that He is three, or that He is one, or that one thing or another is true respecting Him. But if He is not our Father and our changeless Friend, it is all the same to us; and it will not send a ray of light through the darkness thus occasioned, nor lift a hair's weight of the burden thus laid upon our hearts, whether we say the one thing or the other.

And the questions thus fundamental and important with respect to God, are the questions we see answered in the one word *Father*. An infinite breadth, indeed, we see there is in the character thus disclosed. We confess and adore the holiness and wisdom, and justice and power, and every other attribute that concurs to make Him the perfect Being He is. But, amidst all that the Bible says, describing Him, we see these words—"God *is* LOVE,"—shining as the sole definition of His essential nature; and, hence, we learn what is the spirit and purpose of His being, and that, as the hymn says,

> "—mercy is the central sun
> Of all His glories joined in one."

This word *Father*, therefore, stands to us as the divinely chosen symbol of what He thus is, not in name only, but in all the beautiful meaning of the word. Lawgiver, Sovereign, Judge, we believe Him to be, as every father is in his family; but, above all, He is the FATHER, comprehending in this one fact all other relations: *the Father*—not of a few, nor of a part, but of all; *the Father*—by no mere act of creation, and

by no mere grace of adoption, but by virtue of an absolute and original spiritual paternity, and in all the intimacy and tenderness of a Father's love, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever;"—through all the variety of His Providences, dealing with us as a Father;—as a Father, disciplining us through sorrow and trial;—as a Father, rewarding, and no less as a Father, punishing us;—as a Father, presiding over all that concerns us, and constantly interested in our welfare;—forming His plans, from the first, concerning us as His children, and, in due time, sending His first-born to complete the means for bringing home His whole family to Himself.

Thus, then, you perceive that, according to Universalism, the whole universe,—the Past, the Present, the Future, all seasons and all events are radiant with a Father's love. Life is its ordinance, and Death is its instrument. Every good gift and every glad hour is most precious as its witness. Mystery is explained in the light it sheds. Sorrow and pain are brightened with it. Even the severest retribution is relieved and glorified by it, and as we bend beneath our bereavements, it whispers, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away;" look up to the home where He will gather you all at last. Christ's life and cross stand to us as its highest expressions and appeals;—Time is its school;—Eternity is its empire;—all occurrences are its appointments or permissions;—and all souls are in its possession and its care.

And this being the Universalist doctrine of God, we claim for it not only the merit of reasonableness, of

consistency, and of harmony with the principles of Christian morality and our own best moral instincts and ideas, beyond all others, but that it has a force and worth as a Practical Power with which no other doctrine of God can begin to compare. We claim this, mainly, on three grounds :

1. We claim it *because of the more elevated moral standard which is thus furnished.* I scarcely need say that one's conceptions of God will ordinarily furnish his highest model of character,—will always do so except where other influences have operated to educate the moral judgments into a higher ideal. This exceptional possibility is what has occurred in the case of those among our so-called evangelical friends, whose moral instincts are in rebellion against the character they think themselves obliged to ascribe to God, or who propose to themselves higher rules of action than are realized in the God of their creed. The example of Christ and the moral precepts of the Gospel have counteracted the influence of their theory of God, and ripened them into moral conceptions beyond those their God represents. But despite such exceptions, the rule as a rule remains. Comparatively few will ever conceive of any thing morally better, or more perfect, than is realized in their God. Inevitably, therefore, character will be pitched to the key thus furnished, and be, more or less, moulded after the model thus supplied. Hence, long ago, it passed into an axiom, that "nations never rise in their moral character above the deities they worship."

It is in view of this undeniable fact that I claim the

superiority for the Universalist doctrine of God as a Practical Power. Who can look at this doctrine and candidly say that it does not present an exalted model of character? Controversialists, indeed, in the bitterness of their zeal, have sometimes charged that it denies the holiness of God, or the justice of God, and some—with just as much reason—have even been bold enough to allege that it denies the goodness of God. But it is well understood on what grounds such charges are made; and whether the doctrine be accepted or not, no one can intelligently and candidly consider it without confessing that all such charges are without foundation, and that it presents an ideal of moral perfection eminently worthy of imitation. Who can say as much as this of the character of God, as it is popularly presented by any form of the doctrine of a partial salvation?

I do not wish to seem severe, and therefore will not use the terms which most readily suggest themselves to characterize the principles thus popularly alleged. But consider, I pray you, the facts, as any theory of a partial salvation makes up the case against God. I might state them in my own words; but, lest some one should charge me with exaggerating or caricaturing them, I give them to you in the language of unexceptionable authorities. Albert Barnes, some years ago, wrote a review of Butler's Analogy, which has since been published as an Introduction to that work. In it, he says: "We think we see in every human frame, and in the mingled and clashing powers of every society, the elements of ruin, and all that is necessary to secure

that ruin is to remove the pressure of the hand that now restrains the wild and terrific powers, and saves the world from self-destruction. . . . . So in hell, we expect there will be the elements of universal misrule, and that all the foreign force that will be necessary to *secure* eternal misery, will be almighty power to *preserve the terrible powers in unrestrained being*, and to press them into the same mighty prison-house." (p. xxiii.) And, still later, we have the argument of Dr. Adams, of Boston, for the doctrine of endless misery, made as part of a discussion with Rev. Mr. Cobb. "Sinking into a torpid, brutal state," he says, "or rousing themselves into defiant forms of hatred and blasphemy, occupying themselves with plots and counterplots in their strife with each other, the wicked in hell, like bad or abandoned people here, ... if left to themselves, even with their wickedness festering and their crimes becoming gigantic, might manage, by self-control, to reduce things into a system which to their wretched natures might in very many cases be even tolerable." (pp. 19, 20.) And then he proceeds to say that "if they are to be punished, these sufferings must be kept active by an outward power," (p. 22,) and argues that endless misery "necessarily implies infliction or excitation" by God himself. (p. 28.) He declares, moreover, that when "good men"—naming several, some of whom have described the future of the wicked by representing God as holding them interminably in the flames of hell, as one might hold a spider in the blaze of a candle—"portray the pains of the wicked, they fall far below the truth; and their representa-

tions, if at all objectionable, are not so for the reason that they surpass the dread reality, for that is impossible." (p. 23.)

These are horrible things for me to read and for you to hear—shocking to every sentiment of reverence in us, and seeming to me even blasphemous. But they are essential to the subject, and I adduce them to show the character of God, or rather the course of action He will pursue, according to the prevalent theology. I could cite still other witnesses; but these men—living men, men distinguished and honored as the exponents of this theology — are sufficient for our purpose. And accepting these representations as true, what are the facts? In few words, these; viz., that, in arranging His creation, God did just what one of you would do, if, in building a house, you should construct a portion of it into a torture-chamber, furnishing it with all the instruments of agony, and deliberately intending to torment some of your children there as long as they should live;—that He creates souls—no matter whether many or few, so far as the principle is concerned — knowing that He is creating them only that they may, and therefore on purpose that they shall, suffer in this place of torture forever;—that, to all eternity, He will be unmoved by their sufferings and their cries for deliverance, except that He will take a vindictive delight in their woe, and use His power to keep the elements of misrule and anguish in active operation; and that, as the lost seethe in their sin and agonize in their torment, He will, from time to time, interpose to "excite"

them to fresh pains—as we have sometimes read of savages intermitting their dance about a burning prisoner to stir up the coals, or of some fierce inquisitor keenly watching a victim upon the rack only, in the lull of the torture, to give a fresh turn to the screws!

And now, on your consciences, I ask you to look at the character thus ascribed to God—at the principles upon which He is thus represented as acting,—at the model of conduct which He is thus made to furnish, and tell me whether the moral ideal thus presented—presented, let me say, whether the strict endlessness of misery be affirmed, or whether it be mitigated by the theory of the ultimate annihilation of the wicked—is one that is worthy of imitation. I do not care how strong your faith in the prevalent theology may be. I will not now raise the question of the truth or falsity of this theology. But, as honest, candid men and women, I ask you, Is the model of character and action thus supplied, one that you would think it desirable yourselves to follow,—or that you would wish your children to copy,—or that could be generally imitated without killing out the spirit of the Gospel, and taking us back to the violence and retaliations of barbarism?

These questions carry their answers with them. No intelligent man or woman will say that any ruler, that any father of a family, that any person in any of the relations or intercourse of life, could imbibe the spirit, or act upon the principles of God's dealings as thus described, or as any hypothesis of a partial salvation describes them, without being pronounced by the

universal judgment of Christendom atrociously heartless and cruel. Imagine the worst inflictions you can conceive it in the power of human malignity to impose, and heighten them by every possible aggravation, and you have not even begun to approach what God is doing, and will forever continue to do, if the doctrine of endless misery, especially, stated in the mildest possible form, is true. As some one has well said, we "cannot conceive of anything so horrible that God will not infinitely surpass it."

These things being so, then,—and that they are so, nobody can truthfully deny—need I press the question whether such representations of God present as elevated a moral standard, or are fitted to work so healthfully, as a practical power, as *our* doctrine of God as "*the Father*"? I will not recapitulate the statement of this doctrine. Enough that it is the doctrine that God has made no soul and deals with no soul *except for its good;*—that He loves all, pities all, and is ready at any time to forgive all;—that He punishes, whenever or however He may punish, only to benefit; and that he is seeking and purposing, through Christ, to reconcile, and finally *will* reconcile, all as His children to Himself. Contrast this representation of God with that which we have seen, and which we all know to be, the so-called evangelical representation, and then tell me, if you can, that you do not think it higher, better, more elevating and refining. You may be ready, those of you who do not believe this doctrine, with your arguments and reasons to show why you do not believe it. You may have

your palliations and explanations with respect to what your faith tells you God will do. But after all, with these two doctrines of God distinctly before you, and asked, which is the better suited to rebuke us for narrowness, hardness, or unkindness, and to nourish us in love, tenderness and the pitying and forgiving temper of Christ,—or to which you would choose to have your children conformed, or after the likeness of which you would prefer to have them, or to have us conceive of your own character, you *cannot* but point to our doctrine of God as the Father, loving all, forgiving all, saving all, and say, This,—by all means, *this*. *Can you?*

2. But this Practical Superiority of our doctrine of God is to be affirmed, also, on another ground—though it is but another side of that we have been considering. Every one knows to what an extent we are the creatures of our associations; and since the spirit of the divine character, as we conceive it,—the principles and purposes we ascribe to God must determine the associations in which we religiously dwell, no one will need to be convinced that, so far as God is a real being to us, we *must* be affected by such associations—elevated or lowered, enlarged or narrowed, quickened for good, or perverted for evil by them. *We cannot breathe the atmosphere of the divine character without having results corresponding to it wrought in our own characters.* And on the basis of this conceded fact, I claim the Practical Superiority for our Universalist doctrine of God, *on account of the purer and more elevated associations to which it introduces us.*

What has already been said of the contrast between the popular representations of the divine character and ours, will sufficiently illustrate the difference in the associations thus given us. On the one hand, we have God the Father, in whom dwell all divine and holy affections, full of the best purposes and working to the best and kindest results;—on the other, we have the name of Father, indeed, and some talk about His love, and His readiness to forgive, but in fact a God who has cast off, and is constantly casting off, we know not how many of His creatures—if not hating them, certainly unrelenting and pitiless towards them, intent only on demonstrating His implacable vengeance in their wretchedness, and darkening His universe with the shadow of His wrath and of their despair as long as His own being endures. And this being the difference, unless all that is said of the power of our associations be false, is there any need, or even any room for argument as to which of these two classes of associations is the more powerful for good? Can any intelligent man or woman doubt that the more benign and loving our views of God, the larger and tenderer and more constant the affections we ascribe to Him, and the more beneficent the work in which we see Him engaged, the more chastening and sanctifying must be the influence shed into character, and the more positive the power for good in our life?

Look at the facts. Of course I do not forget, in asking you to do this to find proof of the mischievous practical influence of the common doctrine of God, that there have been good men and women,—large,

self-denying, gentle and loving souls, who have believed, or *thought* they believed it,—nor that there are such who think they believe it now. I know there are such; and I honor them, living or dead. But such, as I intimated just now, have dwelt in contact with the merciful and loving Christ, catching his spirit rather than the spirit of the God of their creeds, and are to be cited—not as examples of the influence of their creeds, but as exceptions to this influence, forgiving and loving in spite of it.

What I want you to do is to take a broad and general view of all the facts bearing upon this subject. I need not ask you if History does not show us that, as the rule, nations have been revengeful, licentious, cruel, or mild, kind, exemplary, according to the associations furnished in their deities—because everybody grants this; but I will be more specific, and ask you to tell me who it was that said of old, "How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness, ... liquifying in flames, and blushing in raging fire?" Who was it but one who saw God in the light of the doctrine of endless misery, and who dwelt in the associations thus supplied—Tertullian, the first Christian writer who taught the doctrine, in the assurance of whose truth he exulted so fiercely? Who, through these centuries between us and the Cross, have waged cruel wars, and perpetrated savage butcheries and nameless barbarities in persecution of heretics and for the glory of God? Who but those who have believed in a God who would torture His enemies forever, and who, through familiarity with such a God, have imbibed

His spirit, and been inflamed and perverted by its power? Who was it that devised the Inquisition, so nearly an imitation of the hell of which we hear, and as the presiding geniuses of its atrocities, so well played the part of the fabled fiends of the world of woe? Who but believers in endless misery, dwelling amidst the associations thus furnished, and seeking to honor the God of their creeds by acting in His spirit? Who is it that have opposed the amelioration of laws and the softening of punishments, and that are holding up the gallows to-day by their support? Who but those who have learned their ideas of justice and of punishment at the throne of a vindictive God, and have carried into life the genius of their faith?

I shall not, I trust, be so far misjudged by any one as to have it supposed that I say these things in any spirit of unkindness, or for any purpose of mere controversy even. I refer to these facts, only to illustrate what I honestly believe to be the corrupting and perverting tendency of the common doctrine of God, working itself out to its legitimate results as an element of life. It is a doctrine of wrath and implacable vengeance, and inoculating life with its virus, necessarily, it poisons, it degrades, it embitters, it barbarizes the believer. In the nature of things, if its spirit be caught at all, or there be any force in association, or any law of moral sympathy, it cannot be otherwise.

How different with *our* doctrine of God! Here, every thing is enlarging, elevating, Christianizing. Here is nothing to corrupt, to narrow, to inflame; nothing to engender bigotry, to nurture vengeance, or

to harden the heart. Instead of a God implacable and unrelenting, angry with His enemies, or keeping them alive only to torment them, here is a God loving and merciful, holding the world in the arms of His beneficence, and seeking to make all souls conscious of His love and devoted to His service. We can conceive of no other associations so pure and exalted, as those into which the believing soul is thus introduced. Every thing best and noblest in us is appealed to. Every thing mean or little, every thing unkind or revengeful, every thing oppressive or passionate, or partial, or unjust, is rebuked; and lifted into the companionship of such a God, we are quickened and incited to the broadest love, to the tenderest charities, to the most busy and persistent benevolence; are taught to embrace the world in the arms of our affections,—to forget and forgive the most serious offences, if they are but repented of, and to work on still for the good of our enemies, however they may hate or sin against us. While the most fiendish and cruel monsters, that have ever delighted in the torture of their victims, have but caught and faintly acted upon the spirit of God according to the doctrine of endless misery, the largest and most generous souls, that have ever honored humanity and blessed the world by their noble and unselfish deeds, have but imitated, "at a great way off," our God as the loving and pitying Father of all, catching, sometimes perhaps unconsciously, the aroma of His beneficence, and the inspirations of His example; nor is it possible to over-estimate the worth of this doctrine of God, as a quickening power for all good in one who truly be-

lieves it, or to exaggerate its practical superiority, compared with all the prevalent ideas, as, pointing to a God of infinite, all-embracing and imperishable love, it says to us, "Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

3. But, finally, this Practical Superiority of our doctrine of God is to be affirmed *because of its superior power to enlist the affections in the love of God, and to interest and attract the soul for His service.* The love of God is the essence of all goodness; and that view of God which can most interest souls in Him, and fill them with love for Him, is *the* view which will do most to regenerate and save the world. And could the subject be regarded apart from any prejudices of creed or sect, who here would hesitate to say that there is more in God, as our Universalist doctrine discloses Him, to satisfy and attract the heart and to secure the wholeness of our love as His children, than in any other view in which He is or can be presented? Does any one doubt which is the more likely to be loved—a Sovereign or a Father?—one of certain goodness, or one capricious and unreliable?—one who is never actuated by any spirit but the tenderest love, or one who is vindictive and cruel? If not, on what ground can any man or woman be bold enough to claim for the common doctrine of God, what we are warranted in claiming for Universalism in this respect?

As we have seen, *our* God is the universal Father;—the God of the common faith is simply the Sovereign of souls—the Father only of those whom He chooses to adopt into His family. *Our* God, loving and gra-

cious, has put us into this world, endowed with a pure and noble nature, simply as the first stage in our education,—and having done this, He watches over us here with a Father's solicitude, and purposes to bring all, at last, to a destiny of immortal purity and joy ;—the God of the common faith loves, really and enduringly, but a part of us,—has put us here with a corrupt and depraved nature, which makes it impossible for us to please Him, dooming us before our birth to endless torment, or suspending us over hell by the brittle thread of our uncertain choice,—has so constituted us that we are incapable of ourselves to will what is good, and yet has threatened us with His displeasure if we do not,—and will, finally, blast—nobody can tell how many of us, out of being, or shut us up in the abode of despair, using the resources of His omnipotence only to make us endlessly and hopelessly wretched. And such being the two theories concerning God, I submit that it would be an insult to an intelligent and Christian congregation, to ask which is the better fitted to win the soul to God in love and a practical surrender of itself to His service.

And were it otherwise, and there were really any difference of opinion as to the answer to such a question, the revelations from time to time given us of the inmost life of those trained and, as we have thought, established in the prevalent doctrines, would effectually dispose of the controversy. There is nothing like the solution of experience for any problem of life ;—and this solution we have, as to the practical effect of the prevalent views of God in the life of the devout believer.

Dr. Edward Beecher's "Conflict of Ages" told of the struggles that are exercising thousands of souls, wrestling with the doctrinal and moral difficulties of the traditional theology; and his sister Catharine's book, following soon after, opened to us the experience of other thousands, and perhaps millions, as they want to love God, and yet find themselves thwarted, perplexed and turned away from Him in utter inability to give Him what He demands. Have any of you ever read Catharine Beecher's Confessions?* Nobody will deny that she is a competent witness. Trained under circumstances most favorable to her seeing the traditional theology in its best light,—counselled and instructed by the acute mind of her father, one of the first theologians of his age, she lays open her experience before us:—and what is its testimony as to the worth of the orthodox doctrine of God as a Practical Power? In few words, *this:*—that it is a power of hindrance, of perversion, of irreligion, and even of infidelity,—and *not* of good. She shows how she agonized amidst the contradictions and difficulties of her faith, wanting nothing so much as to be a Christian, and yet unable, believing as she did, to become one,—until, at last, she tells us that, confounded in the labyrinth in which she found herself, *she was "filled with indignation and abhorrence"* towards the God her creed revealed; and about to kneel, to offer her usual formal but hopeless prayer, she arose with the feeling that such a God did not deserve to be loved,—that she would not love Him if she could, and that she was glad she could not!

* "Common Sense applied to Religion."

This, remember, is the testimony of no Universalist, but of one brought up at the feet of one of the orthodox Gamaliels, and still managing somehow to believe the substance of her childhood's faith; and it tells a tale of the practical effects of the popular representations of God, more forcible than any possible speculation or argument can be. And oh, how many other poor souls there are, who could tell the same story!—souls—many of them wrestling and agonizing, like this woman, to get near to God, and to attain some evidence of acceptance with Him, but turned away from Him, and settling into unbelief, into irreligion, sometimes into contemptuous defiance and sin, content to live without God, or in an utterly worldly and atheistic life, because of the darkening, perverting, discouraging influence of the doctrine of the Divine Character that has been given them! In view of such testimony, how can any candid or intelligent person talk of this popular doctrine of God as favorable to piety, or as any thing but one of the most effective agencies of irreligion at work in the world? God *cannot* be loved in the character in which He is thus presented: the conscience and the heart both alike rebel against it; and there is no view of His character against which the conscience and the heart do not thus rebel, when seen exactly as it is, except that in which *our* doctrine of God reveals Him. This satisfies us. Alike the intellect, the conscience, and the heart approve it. It shows God as infinitely worthy of our love because altogether lovely. Beholding Him in the glory with which He is thus invested,

and really touched by the disclosures and appeals thus made to us, we are won to Him in the entire surrender and homage of our hearts;—are taught that every pleasant thing in life is a gift and sign of His love, and that in every dark or trying hour, we can lay our heads on the bosom of His infinite compassion, assured that we are His care;—are rebuked for our coldness and our sin;—are made ashamed of our forgetfulness and disobedience of so good a Father;—are kindled in every affection and aspiration of our being; and loving Him because, as our Father, He has first loved us, we find our rest and joy in communion with His spirit, and in the delights of His service. And it only needs that He be seen by even the most sinful as He is thus presented, to convert them from their waywardness, and to fasten them to His throne, in a love that shall make all life a grateful worship and a filial obedience.

Thus, then, dealing only with the most patent considerations belonging to the subject, I hold the superiority of our Universalist doctrine of God as a Practical Power fully established. And need I now, in closing, if there are any here who have not believed with us, press upon you the argument for Universalism thus furnished? Can a doctrine, of which such an evident practical superiority is to be affirmed, be false? or will you still believe as true, what is so evidently morally mischievous as the doctrine we deny? Especially, my Universalist brother or sister, need I say what, with such a God and Father, our lives and aspirations should be? Surely, able on every account to affirm

the superiority of our faith, we should not let it be said that we dishonor it by living unworthy of its inspirations, or below its just demands. Believe and rejoice in this faith, you who have not before believed it; and let those of us who accept it, not only affirm its superiority in argument, but demonstrate it in action, exhibiting the large, loving, and noble life, which shall at once reflect the spirit and attest the truth and power of the doctrine we profess, in our growing likeness to GOD, THE FATHER.

III.

Christ.

"—— and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

1 Tim. ii. 5, 6.

The character of Christ is confessedly the moral paragon of the world: and as such, it has this peculiarity, viz., that no view can be taken of *him* which can entirely obscure *its* glory, or destroy *its* power. In spite of all misconceptions of his nature and of his office, the sweetness of his spirit, the tenderness of his love, the sincerity of his devotion, the breadth of his sympathies, the heroism of his self-sacrifice, and the unity and marvellous purity of his whole life will appear. Yonder shines the sun; and so long as it shines, no day can be wholly dark, and no vapors can utterly exclude the light and heat it sheds. So, there is a radiance in Christ that even error cannot altogether conceal,—a power that even misbelief or unbelief cannot wholly spoil. Yes, beautiful always, notwithstanding all mysticism and all mistake, stands out that Perfect Life, an embodiment of the completest virtue and the most disinterested love,—the model for all time and eternity, before which Faith reverently kneels, confessing the incarnate image of God, while even a frigid Philosophy is compelled to admiration, and Unbelief itself is hushed into respect and praise. We have heard of the lustre of crowns,—

of the glory of conquests,—of the splendors of wealth,—of the virtues of the good, and of the wisdom of the wise; but there is a glory in that holy life,—a charm in that meek face,—a sublimity in that Cross,—a pathos in that bleeding brow and side,—an eloquence in that prayer breathed from parched lips, in the agony of death, that places Christ, seen through whatever dogmatic error, as far above all these as the stars of heaven are above the glittering bubbles of the ocean, or as the summits of God's mountains are above the pigmies at their base.

So much, then, let it be understood, we not only admit, but affirm. It is my business, this afternoon, to exhibit *the superiority of our Universalist doctrine of Christ as a Practical Power;* but, at the outset, I concede that Christ is a power in believing souls, whatever view may be taken of him. What I propose to show is, that *our* doctrine concerning him is fitted to make him *most* a power in those who believe, and that he "is of God made unto *us* wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" as to none others.

There are two extremes of opinion concerning him, to us equally offensive, and that we account ourselves equally fortunate in avoiding. The first is the unbelieving view—in these days specially put forth by those who, strangely enough, still claim the name of Christian, while making all the denials that have heretofore been conceded to constitute an infidel. Admitting that Christ was a good man, they deny that he was in any special sense sent of God, or that he was gifted with

any supernatural wisdom or power, and allege that he taught simply his own opinions; that he did no miracles; that he was not raised from the dead; and that, in common with all other men, he often erred, teaching what was not true, and doing and saying what was not right. Confessing the excellence of his character on the whole, complimenting and patronizing him as "a great and pure soul," who taught much truth and lived a beautiful life, they, at the same time, assure us that we may all be Christs, and that greater and better Christs are yet to appear.

The other extreme is the Trinitarian hypothesis, of which something was said last Sabbath afternoon. This ascribes a double nature to Christ—a Divine and a Human Nature, and yet declares that these two Christs make but one: thus still further complicating the doctrine of the Trinity, by adding still another to the mathematical contradictions it involves. In the first place, you will remember, we have the doctrine that God is three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, each of these being in himself the Infinite God, and yet the three being only one God. And then, as if this were not enough, we have this further subdivision in the being of Christ, and are told that he is at the same time perfect God and perfect man, and yet that, while thus distinctly two,—God and man, the Infinite and the finite, sometimes speaking as one, and sometimes as the other, he is but one person; and as expressing this one person, we have the term *God-man*, as his designation in the prevalent theology.

It is between these two extremes that *our* doctrine of Christ has its place, occupying, as we believe, "the golden mean" between them, and equally avoiding the disparagement and degradation of the Saviour, in the naturalistic coldness and unbelief of the one, and the undue exaggeration of Christ, in the contradictions and absurdities of the other. To us, he is neither a fallible and imperfect man, nor a God, nor an incomprehensible blending of the two. All that he was in himself and in his relations to his time and to all time,—all that he has done and is doing,—all that conspires to demonstrate the unity and method of God's Providence in History, and the whole combination of evidence and argument, that serves to establish and buttress the Bible as the record of a progressive revelation from Him, and thus to attest the Gospel as His ministry of salvation in the world, forbid that we should thus regard Christ as a mere fallible man;—while every dictate of reason and common-sense, and every lesson of the Scriptures, and every word he ever spake of himself unite to assure us that he cannot be God, nor any such nondescript as is signified by the expression, God-man. While we say, with Nicodemus, that no man could do the miracles Christ did except God were with him, we say, also, that the Son cannot be the Father;—that the Sent cannot be the Sender;—that the one who prays cannot be the Being to whom he prays;—that the Image of God cannot be the God of whom he is the Image;—that even granting that God needed to be appeased, or that His Law needed to be satisfied, Christ could not have suffered to ap-

pease himself, or satisfy his own law;—and that he who was born into this world to die for man cannot be the ever-living God, from whom all life comes, and on whom the universe depends.

As I have intimated, therefore, we see Christ standing between us and God, the Son of Man and the Son of God,—created, dependent, yet divine. In few words, we regard him just as the apostle regarded him—as the "one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." This sums up the whole body of our theology with respect to Christ, better than we can sum it up in any other words. To some among us, he is a super-angelic being, the first creation of God, dwelling with Him in His glory, and His vicegerent in the creation of the worlds; but to all, he is, at the same time, more than a common man, and less than God—one person, the same as any one of us is one; God's messenger and agent—through whom God spake; by whom God wrought; and in whom God's moral perfection is so far incarnated, that he is God manifest in the flesh,—the image of God, whom having seen, we have seen the Father, and through whom the Father is reconciling the world unto Himself.

In this last-named fact, we see the culmination of his glory as our Redeemer. Unlike those who say that he was in no special sense sent of God, we believe that he was sent God's special provision for the salvation of souls; and unlike those who allege either that he came to save only a part, or that, though he came to save

the world, he will succeed in saving but a fraction of it, we believe that he came to save, and that he will succeed in saving all. It is sometimes charged, strangely enough, that, as Universalists, we do not believe in a Saviour. The very opposite is true. Of all Christians, we—and those of other names who affirm the same result—alone believe in a Saviour competent for the salvation of the world. "When were Love's arms stretched so wide as upon the Cross?" asks a recent writer, in the interest of the old theology. *Always*, we say—since there never was a time when God's Love did not embrace all souls. But to us alone, of all Christians, the Cross means not only this all-embracing Love, but an omnipotent Spiritual Force. We see it, and we alone, standing amidst the unbelief and sin of the world, stretching out its arms as the symbol of a saving purpose that includes every soul, and as the symbol, not less, of a conquering power that shall, at some time, subdue the most perverse into faith, and the most sinful into penitence, and before which sin and unbelief shall disappear, as it shall attract the last prodigal home. This is our error, if in error we are—not that we believe too little of the Saviour, but that we believe too much. To us, he is all that the ignorance or the waywardness of souls can require. His ability to save one is to us the pledge of his ability to save all;—the assurance that not a drop of his blood shall be shed in vain, but that the ingathered hosts of God's family, not one missing, shall enable him to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, and thus attest the efficiency and completeness of his work.

This, then, is our doctrine concerning Christ—a doctrine, we allege, the Practical Superiority of which is apparent on the very face of it.

Of its superiority in this respect over the rationalistic or unbelieving theory of Christ, I will not speak at any length. Very manifest it is that such a theory can give him no authority over any conscience; can make him, in no sense, a positive power in any life. Those there are, we all know, professing to be more or less in sympathy with this view of Christ, who are very kind, even devout, and in many respects estimable persons. So there are estimable persons among those who make no pretence of sympathy with religion, and who, honestly infidel with respect to faith, are willing frankly to take the name and sail under their true colors. Their estimable qualities, however, we shall agree, are in no way to be credited to their infidelity, but to what they naturally are, and to the moral and Christian influences amidst which they have been bred, and by which they have unconsciously been moulded and determined. And thus it is with these others, who, sympathizing with this unbelieving theory of Christ, are yet the estimable persons we know them to be. What there is estimable in their characters is the result of nothing in their theory of Christ, but of what they are in taste, disposition, temperament;—of the Christian culture of mind and of manners, and of the Christian ideas and influences, by which they have been surrounded. It is easy for a man when he has come up out of the darkness of some pit into God's free air and light, to kick away the ladder by which he has ascended, declaring it to be worth-

less—and even to persuade himself that it is so. Let him go back where he came from, and he will take a very different view. Precisely so, many good men and women find it easy to say that Christianity, as a divine and authoritative religion, is unnecessary for their culture or their needs, and are sometimes quoted as proof to this effect; and yet, in respect to whatever is best in them, they are the direct product of Christianity as such a religion, and never could have been the men or the women they are except for the influence of the very things in Christianity which they decline to accept, and allege to be worthless.

Religion has been proved by all history and all experience essential to the best culture of individuals and of society;—and a reliable interpreter of truth and duty, some authoritative voice mediating between the Infinite Unseen and the human soul, perplexed amidst its uncertainties, has been equally proved a necessity to make religion most a reality and a power. And because it has no such reliable interpreter of truth and duty,—because it gives us no such mediating voice, speaking to us in God's behalf, but still leaves us uncertain what is right and what is true, this unbelieving, or, as some prefer to call it, rationalistic theory of Christ lacks the means to master souls, and mould and sanctify life—making Christ simply one, even though for the present the best, of mere human teachers, instead of the wisdom of God and the power of God for the salvation of the world. This extreme is, perhaps, but the natural rebound of an outraged reason from the absurdities of the Trinitarian scheme; but it is, in our

judgment, simply Deism, and nothing but Deism, however, to give it respectability, it may be sugared with a Christian pretence. It avoids the difficulties and contradictions of the so-called evangelical theory, only to involve its disciples in difficulties, different, but quite as great, of its own ; and so long as there is any meaning, or preciousness, to us in the faith in God which brightens the Present, or in the Immortal Hopes which glorify the Future, we can have no fellowship for the philosophy which, assuming the name of Christian, like Judas, says to Christ, "Hail, Master!" and kisses only to betray him, and which, taking away our Lord, leaves us no foundation except for dreams and theories, which never yet have satisfied, and never can satisfy, quicken, or redeem a human soul.

Turning, then, from this to the more common theory, with which ours is more particularly, and, as many suppose, disadvantageously contrasted, the superiority of ours as a Practical Power is apparent, for a variety of reasons. Among these, I will take time to mention but three.

I. This superiority appears in the fact that *our doctrine of Christ makes Religion more reasonable, and thus, commending it to the approval and more cordial convictions of the understanding, prepares the way for it to become a more vital power in the heart.* The enlightenment and conviction of the intellect are not always followed by chastened affections and purity of life. And yet, few will doubt, in these days, that the most direct method of influencing the life is through an enlightened un-

derstanding. "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," used to be the maxim of the church—as, in some localities, perhaps, it still is of the Romish church; but the day for any such doctrine in Protestant Christendom has passed. Christianity, as we saw in our first discourse, courts investigation; and despite the old idea, which we sometimes still hear expressed, that Religion is a thing with which Reason has nothing to do, it is becoming more and more widely perceived and confessed, that the form of Christianity, which commends itself to the understanding as most rational and consistent, will, other things being equal, always be most a power in intelligent souls. A blind and unreasoning superstition believes anything; but superstition is not faith, and cannot do the appointed work of faith in souls. It is only the belief that is born of intelligence and thought that is faith in the Christian sense; and such a faith can be given to doctrines only in proportion to their simplicity and reasonableness. Hence, necessarily, in proportion to its simplicity and reasonableness will be the strength and assurance of the faith with which any doctrine will be received, and the measure, therefore, of its efficiency as the master and sanctifier of life.

And this being so, what follows? That *our* doctrine of Christ is more consistent and reasonable, and better approves itself to the understanding of an inquirer, than that which calls itself evangelical, is manifest. Were this the time for it, I might show that this is the distinction of Universalism, in all its doctrines and principles;—that it is, throughout, pre-eminently, a

rational religion, approving itself to and satisfying the intellect by its simplicity and harmony, as no other interpretation of the Gospel can. But confining myself to the point before us, it is enough for me to ask if there is an intelligent man or woman to be found, who will say that the Trinitarian doctrine of Christ is a rational and consistent doctrine?—a doctrine that any thoughtful person can *intelligently* believe? I know how sensitive those who believe it are to any reflections to its disadvantage; but if I am speaking to any such, they must excuse me for pressing this question upon them: Is this Trinitarian doctrine a rational and consistent doctrine to *you?* Is there one present who can say that it is so? or who can say that he or she knows any body to whom it is so? The doctrine of the Trinity has been pronounced "an outrage against our rational nature." Certainly, it is an offence to all our ideas of what is reasonable or probable. "Its three persons, constituting its one God, must either be frittered away into three unnecessary distinctions, into sounds signifying nothing, or they are three conscious agents, who cannot be made one being, with one consciousness and one will."* To say, then, that Christ is one of these three, and yet that with his two associates he is but one, is to contradict the very first principles of common-sense, and to assert what, as was said in our last discourse, is a mathematical impossibility.

Nor is this all. Even if this difficulty were out of the way, the prevalent theory as to the person of Christ himself would make it impossible that any un-

* Channing's Works, vol. III., p. 201.

derstanding should intelligently accept it. Look at it. He is God—and man, we are told, at the same time ;—God-man ;—the Infinite-finite ;—two distinct persons, one of whom can suffer, while the other cannot,—one of whom can pray, while the other is the Being to whom the prayer is addressed,—one of whom is ignorant of many things, while the other knows all things,—one of whom can think and speak and act, while the other is passive, doing neither :—two persons, necessarily, according to this representation, with two distinct wills and two distinct consciousnesses,—yet but one person! Will any body dare to say that this is reasonable,—consistent,—or what any one can believe without doing violence to every rational instinct of our nature?*

The Trinitarian doctrine concerning Christ is thus, you perceive, a double-headed—what shall I call it? I might wound some one if I should call it an absurdity ; and yet, considering that absurdity means something contrary to manifest truth, or to the dictates of common-sense, would this be too strong a word? But even you who believe the doctrine will not deny that it is a contradiction in terms ; and so, lest I might wound you by calling it an *absurdity*, I will call it a *contradiction*. And what I was about to say was, that this Trinitarian doctrine of Christ is a double-headed contradiction :—a contradiction, first, because it says

* Since this discourse was preached, I have heard a Sermon, by the Rev. Dr. Storrs, of Brooklyn, on "The Incarnation," brilliant in its rhetoric, but setting forth the distinctive individuality of these two natures in Christ with an emphasis and fulness of detail beyond any thing I had before heard or read, and impressing me more than ever with the force of the objection above stated.

that he is one of three persons, which three persons are but one Being;—and a contradiction, second, because it says that, in his own special personality, he is two persons, God and man,—the Infinite and the finite, and yet that, being thus two, he is but one. These are contradictions that nobody can fail to see, and that no thoughtful person can fail to *feel* as an insurmountable bar in the way of an intelligent faith. They are contradictions, therefore, with which no thinking person was ever satisfied, and that nobody was ever able to believe, except under the protest of his or her understanding—as unjust demands are sometimes paid.

And even if there is a kind of faith in what is thus alleged, it will be entertained in a confusion of mind concerning Christ, that will necessarily impair his influence as our example. An instructive incident is related on the authority of the orthodox Dr. Adams, from whom I quoted last Sabbath afternoon, which well illustrates the perplexity and confusion of mind, in which many a believer is thus involved in regard to Christ. Dr. Adams says that an excellent old lady, a member of an orthodox church, who professed to believe in the Trinity, was suspected of not paying divine honor to Christ. When told of the suspicions, she was not a little troubled, and said with much sorrowful feeling, "Why, my dear sir, I do really believe that Christ is *e'en a'most* God:"—a remark which at once reveals how indistinct were her impressions concerning Christ; how little she understood the character in which he is to be accepted and followed; and how little, therefore, she could have appreciated the meaning of that character,

for her, or the effect it was designed to produce upon her. The story is told, like so many others, of "an old lady;" but it is a story that might be told, doubtless, of hundreds and thousands who are not old ladies, as well as of some who are:—and could we see the multitudes of sincere souls, who have tried to believe these contradictions of this Trinitarian doctrine of Christ, only to find that, on account of the remonstrances of their reason and common-sense, they were unable to do so, and who, because they have thought them a part of Christianity, have been driven into unbelief and irreligion,—or, could we see the still larger multitude, who have thought they believed these contradictions, and have found themselves thus perplexed and confused, or hindered, stumbling, and dissatisfied in their faith, attaining, on account of the weakness and poverty of their faith, only a weak and poor religious life, we should need no other argument to satisfy us, either that they mischievously interfere with the practical power of the Gospel, or that they are untrue.

But turn, now, in contrast, to *our* doctrine of Christ:—and how different it is with this in all these respects! Here is no contradiction of statement,—no outrage of the understanding,—no confusion of thought. Here is nothing that is not entirely simple, rational, satisfying:—the doctrine of one simple being, sent of God to reveal Him to His children, and to reconcile His children to Him;—a being whose existence is as easily understood as our own;—whose office is in keeping with the entire method of Nature and Providence; and all whose relations are such as to invite the assent of the intellect

and to insure the gratification of the heart. And this being the fact—manifestly, undeniably the fact, I am sure I need not dwell to show how much more cordially and unreservedly this doctrine of ours must be believed, or how much more effectual faith in Christ must be as a Practical Power, when it can thus flow down, with no remonstrances of reason and no confusion of thought to hinder it, through the understanding to the conscience and the heart, to quicken the affections and transfuse itself into the life.

II. I pass, then, to remark, secondly, that we claim this Practical Superiority for our doctrine concerning Christ, *because it shows us his essential humanity, and so more perfectly identifies him with us.* As I said just now, there are those among us—and I confess myself of the number—who regard Christ as the first of created beings, existing rich in the glory he had with his Father before the world was, but becoming poor for our sake, taking on himself the form of a servant, that through his poverty we might become rich. But this does not impair his essential humanity, since the essence of all finite intelligences must be the same. There is an immense difference between an infant and a colossal intellectual man,—between an idiot and a Webster,—and yet, essentially, they are the same, members of the same spiritual brotherhood. So, there is an immense difference between the most gigantic intellect of man and God's highest angels,—between man in his noblest estate and Christ, if, as the view before us alleges, he stands at the head of the intelligent creation; but in

spiritual essence, they belong to the same great family of souls. A man, therefore, Christ was, even if we attribute to him this distinction—a man in the essential qualities of his nature; in the life he lived; in the relations he sustained; in the discipline to which he was subject; in the example he supplied; a man, because tempted, sorrowing, mortal in common with us, though without sin, and ripened into the full expression of the possibilities of our nature.

Without respect to any difference among us on this point of his pre-existence, then, I say that our doctrine of Christ has the Practical Superiority, because it presents him as "*the man* Christ Jesus," thoroughly identified with us. You are all aware how one's power over us is graduated according to his nearness to us. Let a teacher go into a school, and hold himself loftily above his pupils, as if he were never a boy, but a superior being, with no part nor lot in boyish nature, smiling, if he smiles, away up in the great height of his superiority, and doing whatever acts of kindness he may do, still away up there—and you do not need to be told what a gulf there will be between him and his scholars, across which their tenderest interest and affections cannot pass. He may be very good and very kind; but there will always be this distance between him and them; and however they may respect and try to obey, or even love him, he will fail to warm and melt, and to enter into and possess, their hearts, and thus to mould and sway their affections, as one will who not simply stoops to be gracious to them, but, however their superior in knowledge and goodness, meets them on the

level of their own nature, and shows that he is really one with them.

And this but illustrates a universal law. The more perfectly one who wishes to influence us identifies himself with us, the closer he comes to us, the more power he has over us and in us; the more meaning there is for us in his tears;—the more joy in his smiles;—the more vital and musical are his words;—and the more electric is the thrill which the benediction of his touch, or the grasp of his hand sends pulsing through our being. You have all experienced this, and therefore know it to be true.

And this holds true between us and the Saviour as everywhere else. We are a school; Christ is our teacher; and his power over us as his pupils will be in proportion to his nearness to us. It is the practical weakness of the Trinitarian scheme, in this respect, that, while it professes to bring him so near, it, in fact, removes him so far from us, and makes him, in this great school of our Humanity, just like the first teacher I spoke of, moving kindly and yet so loftily above his pupils. I admitted, you remember, in the outset, that Christ is a power in believing souls, whatever view may be taken of him; and to much the same effect, I admit, in reference to this point, that so far as the New Testament is read, and the Christ there presented is believed in, he will be the tender and sympathizing Jesus, coming nearer to us than any earthly friend can, whatever may be the speculative opinions professed concerning him. He is thus near and precious, no doubt, on this account, to the soul of many a

Trinitarian believer. What I mean to say is that, as the creed is studied instead of the New Testament, or as the Trinitarian theology actually determines one's view of Christ, and so really enters as an element into life, an inevitable gulf is created between him and the soul, and his power is proportionally decreased.

The Trinitarian theology talks, it is true, of Christ's humanity. But what is his humanity, if this theology be true? All unreal;—a mere pretence and form;—something put on, in the masquerade in which Christ acts. Have you ever thought of this fact? If I may say so without seeming irreverent or unkind, this word masquerade, signifying a game in which character is assumed, and masks are worn, describes better than any other the part that, on this Trinitarian hypothesis, Christ is acting as a seeming of our Humanity. Use whatever words you may to hide the fact, he is but Divinity masked,—the Infinite acting the part of the finite; and as we think of him in the light of this idea, the Divine swallows up the human, and the finite man is lost to us in the Infinite Being who is merely acting the part of a man, and who cannot be tempted, or suffer, or be moved as we are. Though in the flesh, he is still the infinite God. Though walking the earth, and ministering graciously among men, he is still above the earth, and far away from men; and when the poor, tried, and suffering heart reaches after a Saviour who is one of us, and who can come close to it as one who has been tried and suffered like itself,—lo! the illusion of the word Humanity vanishes,—the mask is lifted, and Christ

however kind or condescending, is not man, but God, after all!

The effect of this cannot but be bad. It takes away our Christ, and gives us God, pretending to be what He is not! How immeasurably superior to this, is *our* doctrine of Christ as a Practical Power! This brings Christ near us—not simply as stooping to us, but as participating in our nature. It makes him our brother, suffering, tempted, sorrowing, rejoicing—in no mere masquerade, or seeming, but just as we suffer and are tempted,—just as we sorrow and rejoice. And as such a brother,—Master, Mediator, Saviour, not simply clothed in our form, but experiencing our weaknesses and our wants, weeping as we weep, with the same reality in his tears—literally, one of us,—must he not—I appeal to any Trinitarian who hears me,—must he not, by the necessities of our nature, address our sympathies, and take hold of our affections, and win us to confidence, and become a living and positive force at the centre of our being, as only such a view can enable him to do? Only as we thus regard him can we at all appreciate the fine thought of the apostle, as he says to the Hebrews, "For, verily, he took not on him the nature (or form) of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham, . . . that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest: . . . for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted, . . . touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Only on our theory of Christ is any such language, or the lesson it conveys, possible.

And, before leaving this point, do not fail to consider the advantage given to this doctrine of Christ, in consequence of this *reality* with which it thus clothes every thing he was, or did. Trinitarians are fond of saying, that Christ is made an object of more moving interest, and the scheme of redemption a grander spectacle, when he is regarded as God, who left His glory to take flesh and suffer for man; and, no doubt, they are, frequently, strongly moved by the idea. "But," to borrow Dr. Channing's thought, "so far as they are thus moved, it is in a misapprehension of their own doctrines. They talk of the second Person in the Trinity as leaving his glory, to visit and save the world. But, what do they really mean? Consider a moment. According to the doctrine of the Trinitarians, this second Person, being the unchangeable and infinite God, was incapable of parting with the least degree of His perfection and felicity. At the moment of His taking flesh, He was as intimately present with His Father as before, and equally with His Father was God, filling heaven and earth and all immensity. This, our Trinitarian friends not only acknowledge, but assert: and yet they profess to be touched and overwhelmed by the amazing humiliation of this immutably glorious Being,"*—when there was no humiliation in the case! His humiliation is a fiction,—a part acted,—as I have said, a masquerade. Really, then, with what force can any appeal be made to the heart on this ground?

But there is something, if possible, still worse to be

* Works, vol. iii. p. 81.

said on this point. Not only does this Trinitarian doctrine of Christ, when we come to understand it, thus make his humiliation a mere pretence, something seeming, but not real; it destroys the power of the Cross. Wherein is the power of the Cross? In the spectacle of self-sacrifice which it exhibits, doubtless we shall all agree in saying;—in that great love of Christ, which led him, for the sake of attracting, quickening, and saving souls, so to forget himself as to be willing to hang upon it in agony and to die in ignominy;—in that unconquerable trust, and patience, and fidelity, which so irradiate and glorify the terrors of the scene;—and in that spirit of sublime disinterestedness which induced him in that hour of torture to think, not of himself, but of others, and to pray even for his murderers. But, if we are to believe the Trinitarian theory, all this was simply in appearance. To borrow again the thought of Dr. Channing, "Christ was, comparatively, no sufferer at all. True, his humanity suffered; but this, we are told, was an infinitely small part of him, bearing no more proportion to his whole nature, than a drop to the ocean. His Divine Nature—that which was most properly himself, could not suffer, and did not. Whilst hanging on the Cross, he was as unconscious of pain and as happy as the Infinite Father—the happiest being in the universe, so that his pains compared with his felicity were nothing. Justly viewed, the Trinitarian theory thus robs his death of interest; weakens our sympathy with his sufferings; makes the Cross an illusion; and is thus proved, of all others, most unfavorable to a love of

Christ, founded on a sense of his sacrifices for mankind."* As the Infinite God, there were no sacrifices which, except in seeming, he could make.

How different from all this it was, according to our doctrine of Christ! This makes everything about him real. That temptation in the wilderness;—that loneliness and yearning of the heart, as he saw how little he was understood;—that agony in Gethsemane;—those sufferings on the cross;—all that enters into his humiliation, and that makes up his experience—all this is actual to *us;* and as we look at our suffering Lord, so calm amidst trial,—so patient amidst discouragements,—so shrinking from his fate, and yet so resigned to it, if the Father willed,—so agonized, and yet so self-forgetful, it is no masquerade,—no mere seeming,—nothing pertaining only to an inconsiderable fraction of his nature, that we see; it is a brave, pure, loving and disinterested soul, taking up his cross for our sake, and walking through this path of trial to this end of anguish and of blood, that he might win us to himself, in a sense of his love, and thus win us to the Father, in a sense of His greater love.

And all this being true, am I not justified in saying that this Universalist doctrine of Christ so presents him, that he takes hold of the sympathies, and appeals to the affections, and makes the Cross a rebuking, attractive, and saving power, as the common view does not, and cannot?

* Works, vol. iii. pp. 81–82.

III. But, finally, the Universalist doctrine of Christ has this Practical Superiority, *because it presents his character as unchangeable, his power as all-sufficient, and his work as finally complete.* This is the peculiar glory of Universalism, and is that which gives its crowning and peculiar efficiency to our doctrine of the Saviour. As I asked last Sunday afternoon with respect to God, so I may ask here concerning Christ, need I say who is likely to be most to you, or to have the largest power over you—a capricious or a constant friend?—one who, however much regard he may profess for you to-day, may be found lacking of all sympathy for you to-morrow, or at some future time, possibly in the season of your greatest need,—or one on whom you are assured that you can rely through all changes and under all circumstances, and who will be only the more devoted the more you need his aid? Or, need I ask who is most fitted to attract and inspire followers—a leader equal to every emergency and sure of success, or one of only partial fitness for his work, and certain to fail of accomplishing all he has undertaken?

It is the crime of the prevalent doctrine of Christ, that, instead of a constant, faithful, and efficient Saviour,—a Friend, "who sticketh closer than a brother,"—a Leader, sure of success,—a Redeemer, able and mighty to save, it gives us only a weak and capricious Friend,—a Leader, who insists, as a condition of our discipleship, that we shall believe in his incompetence,—and a Redeemer, who either can, but will not, or will, but cannot, save all who need his succor. It tells us that though Christ was the tender and

sympathizing Friend of sinners in this world, he was so but for a season; that yonder, he is to be changed, his face becoming as flint, and his heart as stone, towards them, as he sits their pitiless Judge, intent only on dooming them to irretrievable woe; and that the smoke of hell, forever ascending, and the hosts of the damned, forever sinning and suffering, shall be the perpetual witnesses, proclaiming through eternity either that he was unable, or that he was unwilling, to redeem the world. And yet, those who allege these things concerning Christ, claim to be the special keepers of his honor, and even put on airs and tell us that we deny the Saviour, because we refuse to believe that he can so change, or that he can or will fail to give his help to a single poor soul that needs to be brought home to God!

Deny the Saviour! Who are they that deny the Saviour—we who say that his power is equal to all emergencies, and that he will not rest till he has reached the last prodigal, and subdued him into penitence and reconciliation to God, or they who allege that he will relinquish his work incomplete, and that eternity is to be shadowed with the suffering, and to echo with the groans, of those whom he could not, or would not save? Let it be confessed, if you please, that it is better to have this partial Saviour, preached by the Church, than to have none, and that comfort and quickening may be found in believing in him, if one knows no better Friend, and has no Saviour more effectual for the needs of sinning and suffering souls. But, after the most has been made of him, how much more of a

Saviour *we* have in our effectual and conquering Christ!—a Saviour, beyond whose reach no soul can wander;—a Saviour, over whose faithful love no change ever comes;—a Saviour, before whose power all obstacles shall finally yield, and at the foot of whose cross all souls, at last, shall kneel;—and whatever may be said as to the appeals which the Christ of the prevalent creeds makes to our regard, or as to his power to affect and regenerate souls, how much stronger are the claims of this Christ whom we preach, upon the love and confidence of the world, and how much more of a power he must necessarily be in believing souls!

My friends, there are many things surprising to me in this controversy between Universalism and the traditional faith; but I confess there is nothing that surprises me more,—scarcely any thing that surprises me so much, as this accusation that *we* deny the Saviour. Of all Christians, as was intimated in the statement of our doctrine, we most magnify his office. Of all Christians, we *alone* glorify him as the unchangeable Friend and effectual Redeemer. To none others is he so much in himself, or is his Cross the sign of provisions so ample, or of a grace so puissant. And this being the fact, of all marvellous things it does seem to me one of the most marvellous, that those who deny his efficiency, who allege his capriciousness, who limit his work, and who thus insist on robbing him of his crown as the "Lord of all," should assume to be his champions rather than we,—should arraign *us* as those who deny him, and seriously think that the partial, unreliable and incompetent, or indifferent, Christ whom they preach, is

better and more potent to draw, inspire, and save souls than *our* constant and victorious Redeemer! I can understand how one, hindered by prejudice, or misconceptions, can fail to believe in the Christ of our faith. I can understand how those who know no other, can find much to interest them in the Christ of the common faith. But I cannot understand how any man or woman of ordinary intelligence can regard a partial as more glorious than a universal Saviour; and especially, I cannot understand by what processes of reasoning such a person can, for a moment, think that the Christ who cannot, or who will not, save all, is a more constraining force for the attraction and regeneration of souls, than a Saviour who enfolds all in the arms of his mercy, and who will, at some time, surely lead the race to God.

Put the thing to the test of actual experiment. I might use our present circumstances as a nation to illustrate the several points now before us. I might ask who, in the midst of this conflict with rebellion, honor our generals most—those who insist that they are able to vanquish traitors, and surely will do it, or they who croak that the rebellion cannot be overcome, and that, at the most, our armies will succeed only in reducing a portion of the conspiring states to their allegiance. I might ask, which of these classes comes nearest towards saying that we have no general. But, not to tarry for these questions, let me ask you, What kind of a general would awaken the most enthusiasm among our people to-day? Here, we will suppose, are two candidates before us:—one has a name every where rec-

ognized as the symbol of triumph,—the other has a name significant only of partial success;—one is believed to be fully competent for all the exigencies of the struggle, and the conviction is universal that, marching only to victory, he will completely subdue the rebellion, and convert all rebels into loyal and faithful citizens,—the other is pronounced by every body unequal to such a task, and it is agreed that, in spite of all he can do, the rebellion will survive, to wave its flag as long as our republic stands. Which, now, of the two will win the most affection, and inspire the most assurance, and attract the largest numbers to his standard, and prove the most a power in the army and the country? Who doubts how to answer such a question?

And the principle on which the answer to this question is so apparent, is the principle on which the Practical Superiority of our doctrine of Christ is equally manifest. The assurance of entire competence and of certain success always inspires confidence, and gives a personal force as nothing else can. There is a tremendous and electric power in the *prestige* of victory. It was this that made Napoleon so much in France and to his soldiers, so that, in a battle, his simple presence was equal to forty thousand men. And it is this, in a far higher and nobler form, that makes the conquering and successful Christ of Universalism so much more as the efficient "power of God unto salvation," than the defeated, or indifferent, Christ of the prevalent creeds. He is clothed with the moral prestige of victory. However he may know delay, we are assured, he can never

know defeat. Come what will, he has the resources that render him equal to the emergency, and the constancy of his love is the pledge of the certainty of his triumph.

Have you ever really thought, my brothers and sisters, what a Friend and Saviour we have in Christ, according to this doctrine of ours? It is one of the things most to be regretted in connection with it, that there are so many *professing* to accept it, who so entirely fail to appreciate what it reveals concerning him, and whose eyes never have been opened to see, and whose hearts, therefore, never have been moved to feel, the significance of his Cross, or the appeals of his love. Look at him—as he is thus disclosed to us, in the plenitude of his power,—in the tenderness of his sympathy, —in the immutability of his interest in those whom he came to save. No ignorance is beyond the reach of his instruction. No perversity can weary his purpose of good. No obstinacy can exhaust the resources of his grace. There is no need that he cannot answer. There is no sorrow that he cannot soothe. There is no scene so dark that he cannot make it bright,—no grave above which he does not proclaim his message of hope,—no wanderer that he will not seek and find, —no soul that he will not save. And as he thus stands before us, so august, and yet so benign in presence,— so tender and affluent in all helpful ministries,—so willing and mighty to save, who, that sees him as he is, can fail to feel the magnetism that streams from his face, and to confess that this is indeed *the* Christ, not only most sufficient for consolation, but most po-

tential to win, and mert, and sanctify souls? No wonder that the apostle speaks of a time when "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Thus to see him is to be filled with a sense of imperfection,—is to be penetrated with a sense of need,—is to be kindled in every best affection,—is to be prostrated in a sense of obligation, and a confession of penitence, at the foot of his Cross, in the fulness of a self-surrender which says, Here, Lord, I give myself to thee; make me thine, as thou art mine. Only of the Saviour so loving, so constant, so victorious, as our faith reveals him, can this subduing and assimilating power be so emphatically affirmed; and by this power, he is yet to attract and save every sinful soul.

Here, then, I rest, leaving much that I would be glad to say still unsaid, but holding the claim of our discourse fully established. Fitting is it that Christ should have been our theme, this afternoon, with Christmas and all its dear associations so near at hand;* and let me hope that what has now been said will help you to welcome the day in a firmer assurance, if possible, that he of whom it reminds us was indeed born the Son of God, to be the Saviour of the world, and in a profounder sense of the practical power of our Universalist doctrine concerning him. If I have spoken to one who has not heretofore believed so much as we concerning him, let me commend to such an one the considerations I have submitted, as reasons why you should cease to doubt the completeness of his work, and rejoice with us in the conviction that he cannot fail, but will, at length, ac-

*This Discourse was given on the Sunday before Christmas.

cording to his own word, "draw all men unto him." (John xii. 32.)

Especially, let me commend what has been said, to every professed Universalist to whom I speak, and ask that, as never before, you will feel the meaning of the Saviour's life and love, and the attractions of his Cross, as Universalism exhibits them, and let the glow of your religious affections, and the fervor of your zeal, and the depth and richness of your Christian experience attest, that he is indeed a redeeming power within you. In vain does the pulpit claim the practical superiority for our doctrine of Christ, if the pews afford the testimony of prayerless and unchristian lives to contradict it. On Christ as he is revealed to our eye of faith, then, let us love to dwell; near him, let us love to live. Oh, as he rises before us, in his matchless tenderness and purity, so pleading with us in his words and in his life,—so pleading with us from his cross,—nay, as he comes so near to us, the answer to all our possible needs, asking to be so much to us as our Instructor, Companion, Comforter and Redeemer, how he shames our unbelief! How he rebukes our coldness, our indifference, and our sin! With him thus ever pleading with us, shall not our hearts be moved, and in the speech of aspiring and consecrated lives, whether in our homes, our business, or our pleasures, shall not our response be—O thou tender and faithful Friend,—O thou efficient and universal Saviour, become in us the Quickening Spirit, and so draw us to thyself, that we may know, possess, and honor thee!

IV.

Human Nature.

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."—Genesis i. 27.

Next to God, there is no subject of study so important as our own nature. "*What is man?*" is a question of higher concern,—"*Know thyself*," a more serious admonition, than any pertaining to material forms, or mere physical relations. Man is ever more than matter. Souls are superior to their surroundings.

It is so, whether we regard the subject in its moral or its purely intellectual connections and uses. A thorough study of our own nature introduces us to facts and questions,—into deeps and heights of inquiry and speculation, that challenge and sharpen thought as no mere scientific investigations can;—and, morally, it is obvious, that while it is well for us, as far as we can, to enlarge our knowledge of the universe—to walk, as astronomers, among the stars,—as geologists, among the rocks,—as chemists and philosophers, in the great laboratory of nature,—as the disciples of science, wherever science has any fact to reveal, or any truth to tell, there are no lessons to be thus learned, so fitted to awaken us to a becoming self-consciousness, and, therefore, to quicken, broaden, and uplift us, as is a study of our own nature, and a knowledge of our capacities, relations,

and destiny. Our great concern is to grow as souls; and all knowledge is important to us in the exact ratio of its fitness and power to further this end. Even the knowledge of God holds the place it does as the most important of all knowledge, only because it takes us up to the point at which we can best begin to study ourselves, and because it thus supplies us with those facts and principles, in the apprehension of which alone have we the materials for our largest and noblest life.

There are various modifications of opinion, but, in fact, only two fundamental theories concerning Human Nature: the doctrine of Total Depravity, and the doctrine of the native rectitude and corruptibility of souls. As to the *fact* of Human Depravity, there is but one opinion. The world is too full of wrong for this to be overlooked or denied. But different explanations are given of the fact, and these explanations are the two doctrines I have named.

The first, or the doctrine of Total Depravity, as it has been fittingly called, alleges the essential corruption of our nature, and solves the problem of the widespread evil of the world on this ground. Augustine, the father of the general system afterwards elaborated by Calvin, and called Calvinism, said that "man is so corrupted by the sin of Adam, that he can will and do only evil." Calvin says that we have "an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all parts of the soul;" that infants "bring their condemnation with them from their birth, being liable to punishment, not for the sin of another, but for their own;" that "their whole nature is, as it were, a seed

of sin, . . . odious and abominable to God;" and that "we are so vitiated and depraved in all parts of our nature," that "we are justly convicted and condemned before God." The Westminster Assembly, in whose catechisms the theology of Calvinism was put into definite form for the indoctrination of the people, says that "a corrupted nature was conveyed from our first parents to all their posterity, . . . whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." President Edwards, one of the oracles of the popular church, taught that there is "an innate sinful depravity," and that "the heart of man is naturally of a corrupt and sinful disposition." More recently, Dr. Hodge, the teacher of theology at Princeton, has affirmed "the thorough depravity of the whole nature, penetrating far beneath the acts of the soul," on account of which, "it is the doom" of all men that they "commence existence out of fellowship with God," and "as having forfeited his favor," "utterly deprived of those original influences of the Spirit without which the mind cannot be developed in the image of God, but becomes inevitably sinful and corrupt, even before choice and action;" and Dr. Woods, of Andover, no less eminent authority, teaches that there is in the nature of man, anterior to knowledge or choice, a proneness or propensity to sin, which is "the essence of moral evil," "the sum of all that is vile and hateful."*

These authorities are, perhaps, sufficient; but as still further illustrating the form in which this doctrine is now held, let me read from the "Short Cate-

* These extracts are quoted from Dr. Beecher's "Conflict of Ages."

chism for Young Children, by John Brown, of Haddington." It is the "milk for babes," which the Presbyterian Church is every Sabbath administering in its Sabbath Schools.* It says:—"*Q.* What kind of a heart have you by nature? *A.* A heart filled with all unrighteousness. *Q.* Does your wicked heart make all your thoughts, words, and actions sinful? *A.* Yes; I do nothing but sin. *Q.* Can you of yourself reform and renew your wicked heart? *A.* No; I am *dead* in trespasses and sins." . . . *Q.* What is original sin? *A.* It is that in which I was conceived and born. *Q.* Doth original sin wholly defile you, and is it sufficient to send you to hell, though you had no other sin? *A.* Yes. . . . *Q.* What are you then by nature? *A.* I am an enemy to God, a child of Satan, and an heir of hell. . . . *Q.* Cannot your good thoughts, words, or actions recover you by the covenant of works? *A.* No; every thing I do is sinful. . . . *Q.* Can you satisfy God's justice for your own sin? *A.* No; I cannot even cease from adding to my sin."

I have thus multiplied these statements of the so-called evangelical doctrine of Human Nature, that there might be no difficulty, or mistake, in perceiving what it is. The authorities thus cited have been Calvinistic; but they equally well express the Arminian doctrine, it being one of the fundamental principles of the Arminian, as of the Calvinistic, theology, that "man, in conse-

* I stated, in giving this discourse, that the copy from which I read was one taken by a friend from his little daughter, who had received it as a scholar in the West Twenty-second Street Presbyterian Sabbath School.

quence of his natural corruption, is incapable of thinking or doing any good thing."

Accordingly, we find the "Catechism of the Methodist Episcopal Church," used in all Methodist Sunday Schools, teaching as follows: "*Q.* Wherein consists the sinfulness of that state into which man fell? *A.* It consists in the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. *Q.* In what consists the misery of that state into which man fell? *A.* All mankind, being born in sin, and following the devices and desires of their own corrupt hearts, are under the wrath and curse of God, and so are made liable to the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell hereafter." And the Seventh of the "Articles of Religion," in "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church," reads, "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk,) but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually."

Thus, then, we see that the theory, common to all so-called evangelical believers, is, as the old Primer states it, that

> "In Adam's fall
> We sinned all;"

or, at all events, that, in consequence of this first sin, all men are born in an essentially depraved, or corrupt,

condition, not only void of righteousness, but, by nature, absolutely incapable of it.

There are those still claiming to hold "orthodox" opinions, who revolt at the old statements of this doctrine of Total Depravity—as they do at all the hard doctrines of the old creeds, and who refine and soften *their* statements of Depravity into less repulsive forms. But, however modified in statement, if native and original depravity is held in any form, the essence of the old doctrine remains; and it is only this that can give any logical consistency to the so-called evangelical doctrine of Regeneration. This doctrine alleges Regeneration to be the result of the direct and supernatural action of the Divine Spirit. Such direct and supernatural action, it is assumed, is indispensable, since only a supernatural cause can change a corrupt into a holy nature. Whoever holds *this* doctrine of Regeneration, then, is logically necessitated to recognize the truth of the blankest and harshest forms in which the doctrine of Total Depravity can be stated; and soften and refine terms as they may, it still remains true, according to their theology, that human nature is, in itself, corrupt and wicked, opposed to God, and unable to serve Him;—as the authorities say, "incapable either of thinking or doing any good thing,"—"utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil."

This is one side of the case. *Our* doctrine of Human Nature denies all such theories, however stated—denies them, not only as libels against man, but as

blasphemies against the Creator and Father of man. As was just now intimated, we do not deny that men are depraved; but the depravity, we allege, is of *character*, and not of *nature;* comes of the *corruptibility*, and not of the innate and positive *corruption*, of souls. God made man in His own image, at first, the text tells us; and in His own image, we believe, He still makes him. To say that God creates depraved and sinful souls—sending them into this world utterly opposed to all good and inclined to all evil, and therefore abhorrent in His sight, is, we allege, to impeach His goodness, and to charge Him with a monstrous misuse of His power. Man's nature, therefore, we say, as it comes from God, is good—the likeness of God himself in its purity, and its moral as well as its intellectual powers. At the base of our nature, as we are here constituted, we see passions and propensities, which, unduly indulged, lead into sin. But these passions and propensities, we affirm, are not bad in themselves; nor do they necessarily result in evil. On the contrary, as we exist in this world, they are absolutely essential for purposes of good. We should not be human beings, adapted to the circumstances under which we are here placed, without them. But, blind and craving as they are, they may lead to excess and to sin, if reason and conscience do not preside over and control them. And because reason and conscience do *not* preside over and control them, as is thus required, men are led astray; and powers bestowed for good are abused or perverted; and character is depraved; and the soul becomes corrupted, under the dominion of sin.

But sin is the unnatural, and not the natural and normal, condition of souls. Depravity is the *circumstance*, and not the *essence*; the *accident*, and not the *necessity*, of our nature. We are *made* pure; we *become* impure. Whatever the hereditary tendencies born in us, God creates each one of us, as He did Adam at first, His moral image, with all the glory of an untarnished spiritual nature, and all the germs, capacities, and materials of excellence within us:—morally corruptible, indeed, as was Adam, because subjects of moral discipline; because clothed with the power of will and of choice; because able to form characters; but not morally corrupt; and if we sin, and become corrupt, it is not because we *must*, perforce of the evil born in us,—not because, as the Presbyterian Church is teaching its Sabbath School children, we "*cannot* cease adding to our sin," but because, amidst the temptations by which our virtue is tried, or the circumstances under which our lot is cast, we so choose and will:—and with ourselves, and not with God, or our nature, is the responsibility.

And while all the victims and servants of sin,—all the besotted, the criminal, the depraved, seen as the dregs of our civilization, or among the barbarous and untutored tribes on whom no light of civilization has ever shone—while these, alas! only too sadly and fearfully tell what our nature, corrupted and perverted, *may* become, all the great and the heroic, all the disinterested, the pure, and the good, all that has ever given charm and sanctity to womanly virtue, or nobleness to manly strength,—crowned by the sublime life

of the noblest and purest of all, "the *man* Christ Jesus," only unite to attest what our nature *is*, properly unfolded; — only show us what even the most besotted and depraved are, in essence, and what, through the redeeming agencies of God's grace in Christ, they shall, at some time, become in actual condition and character.

This, then, is the Universalist doctrine of Human Nature:—and this being the doctrine, its superiority, as a Practical Power, over the more prevalent theory is evident, we think, from whatever point of view the subject may be regarded. Any doctrine of Human Nature, actually believed, must, necessarily, affect us—first, in our own characters; and, second, in our views and feelings with respect to others.

I. And regarding this doctrine of ours, first, in its relations to the personal character of the believer, we say—

1. That it is practically superior to the prevalent doctrine, *because it is more elevating, and fosters a quicker sense of responsibility, and, therefore, a deeper sense of guilt in sin.* Many excellent people have believed the common doctrine, as many still profess to believe it; but look at it carefully, for a moment, and then say if its inevitable tendency is not debasing, and fatally destructive of all sense of moral responsibility. Take a child—no matter how bright or promising, and persistently denounce him as a dunce and a fool; insist that he is vile and wicked; educate him to believe that it is not in his power to learn any thing, or to

become any thing, and that if he ever does attain to any knowledge, or any worth, it must be through nothing that he can do, but only as some one else shall give him knowledge, or make him good: and what, in nine cases out of ten, if not in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred, will be the result? Will it not be that the boy will become what you have so persistently told him he is?—with no interest in study; with no ambition or effort to improve; with no sense of responsibility; with no respect for himself; a dunce; low in his tastes and aims,—perhaps a criminal? You know that it would be so:—and for all that your child is worth, you would not have such an experiment tried with a boy or girl of yours.

And yet, is not what I have thus supposed dinned into the ears of this child, precisely what the doctrine of Total Depravity, in whatever form it may be held, insists on teaching us all concerning ourselves? It tells us that we are vile; children of the devil, with no power to be otherwise; opposed, in ourselves, and in all that we think or do, to God, as we must be until His Spirit shall please, independent of us, to create us anew. Take, for example, these formulas that Presbyterian Sabbath Schools are constantly putting upon the lips, and, as far as they can, into the deepest convictions and hearts of their pupils, to color and determine all their estimates of themselves, and of their powers and responsibilities,—"I am, by nature, an enemy to God, a child of Satan, and an heir of hell,"—"every thing I do is sinful," and "I cannot cease adding to my sin:"—and however you may have failed, heretofore,

to realize the tendency of such teaching, can you doubt that it must be mischievous? or, will any one candidly say that, while a boy or girl would be morally and intellectually ruined by the course of treatment to which I have referred, in a school, or a home, boys or girls, or men or women are to be spiritually awakened and elevated, made abhorrent of sin, and active and earnest in their efforts to forsake it, by *such* teachings, constantly enforced and actually believed?

The idea is preposterous. Tell any person, young or old, that he is bad, without any power to make himself better, persuading him really to believe it, and as far as such a result is possible, you make responsibility an absurdity in his estimation, and his life will be degraded and his conduct shaped accordingly. Tell any one that he absolutely *cannot* do a thing, and convince him that he cannot, and however you may preach that he *ought*, he will feel no sense of obligation to do it, and no sense of blame for not doing it. Hence, the whole tendency and inevitable influence of the doctrine of Total Depravity, so far as it positively becomes a power in life, is evil, and only evil continually. It destroys self-respect. It deadens conscience. It kills aspiration. It discourages effort. It degrades the whole tone of taste and character; and persuading its believers that they are the children of the devil, and must be, till God shall please miraculously to make them otherwise, it blunts, and, as far as their moral instincts can be repressed so as to make it possible, annihilates all sense of accountability,—renders them content to be and to do evil, and works to make them children of

the devil in character, as it teaches them they are in nature and in fact.

This, unquestionably, has been the result of this doctrine, to an extent we little dream of:—not to the extent, let it be thankfully confessed, to which the doctrine has been professedly believed;—a fact which significantly tells of the elasticity of our nature and its superiority often to its creeds. But could we see the efficient forces which have contributed to stupefy conscience, to encourage neglect and irreligion, and to make men satisfied to live a low and sinful life, we should see an amount of mischief traceable to this doctrine, so pertinaciously enforced, which would demonstrate it to be in the highest degree pernicious,—one of the most positive and fruitful agencies of demoralization operating in the world.

And, having said this of the prevalent doctrine, need I dwell to point out the natural influence of *our* doctrine in contrast? This makes sin the voluntary degradation and dishonor of a noble nature. It tells us that when we consent to do evil, we discrown ourselves as the children of God, and go down to wallow in the dust. It tells us that God has made us in His own image—for noble uses and companionships; that we have the power to be in virtuous attainment, through that help of His which is never far from any one of us, whatever we will to be; that if we yield to temptation, and fall into sin, it is our own fault; and thus quickening conscience, and intensifying our sense of accountability, it summons us to honor ourselves in a life becoming the purity, elevation, and exalted capacities of the nature

with which God has gifted us, as those made in His image, and His children. And this being so, I am sure I may assume it as apparent that *such* a doctrine must be more elevating,—more quickening to conscience,—more efficient to kindle the soul to self-respect, and more surely productive of a healthy sense of guilt on account of wrong-doing, than the other. We pass, then,

2. To say—what is, perhaps, but another side of the point just considered—that the Practical Superiority belongs to this doctrine of ours, in its personal bearings, *because it makes the work of reformation and of Christian culture so natural and intelligible.* It is at once the weakness and the curse of the popular theory, that it so mystifies its believers with the conflicting doctrines of utter impotence and yet of positive obligation, and thus so confounds and perplexes them in their desires for a better life. How a soul opposed to all good, and full of all evil, all whose acts and all whose thoughts,—nay, whose very prayers, are an abomination in God's sight,—a soul absolutely unable, by the necessities of its very constitution, to do any thing to make itself good, can be under obligation to be good, or can do any thing towards becoming so, has ever been the problem which, I had almost said, more than any other, has exercised the thoughts of theologians, and operated as a hindrance to Christian growth. Even those who have most ably defended the doctrines out of which this problem comes, have been obliged to confess them opposed to all our ideas of reason and right;—to own themselves, with Dr. Woods,

of Andover, "perplexed and confounded" by them; and to say, with Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, that these things "*cannot be explained on the common-sense principles* of moral government," and that the system is "*not a system of common-sense*, but of profound and awful mystery!"

And when so much as this is acknowledged by the acutest minds, can we wonder that, to the mass of Christians, this whole subject of religion, and of "the way to get religion," or to become acceptable to God, should have seemed inexplicable—hedged about with insolvable difficulties? Can we wonder that so many have been confused and distressed as to what they ought to do, or that so many others have counted it not worth while to perplex themselves about the subject, and have settled into coldness and unconcern, with the feeling that, if they are to be converted, they shall be when the time comes?

Let one case from actual life illustrate the practical influence of the common doctrine in this respect: the case of Catharine Beecher. I have already once alluded to her in these Discourses; but the importance of the subject, and the remarkable character of her testimony, will justify me in referring to her again. She gives this description of her religious impressions up to the age of sixteen: "I thought that God made me and all things, and was very great, and wise, and good; that, because Adam and Eve disobeyed Him *once* only, He drove them out of Eden, and then so arranged it that all their descendants would be born with wicked hearts, and that though this did not *seem*

just or good, it was so; that I had such a wicked heart that I could not feel or act right in any thing till I had a new one; that God only could give me a new heart; that if I died without it, I should go to a lake of fire and brimstone, and be burned alive in it forever; that *revivals* were times when God, the Holy Spirit, gave people new hearts; that when revivals came, it was best to read the Bible, and pray and go to meetings; but that"—please mark the statement, as showing the effect of the doctrine she believed, as a Practical Power—"but that *at other times, it was of little use.*"

At length, under the influence of "revival preaching," she was taught to look at God as a great "Moral Governor," whose chief interest was to "sustain His law." Then there seemed to be *two kinds of right and wrong*—the "common" and the "evangelical." "According to this distinction," she says, "I could not feel or do any thing that was right or acceptable *to God*, till my birth-gift of a depraved heart was renewed by a special Divine interposition. Meantime, there did not seem to be any direct and practical way of securing this supernatural interference—for it was to be the result not of any efforts of mine. Moreover, all the exhortations to effort were based simply on the fact, that, ordinarily, those who took a certain course were selected, though I perceived that sometimes those who did the least were chosen, while those who did the most were passed by. It was this view of the case that had the chief influence in leading"—please particularly to mark the statement again, as a practical com-

mentary on the claims to special religious power made in behalf of these doctrines which she believed—"in leading *to an entire neglect of all religious concerns.* It was so nearly like a matter of mere chance, and there seemed so little adaptation of means to ends, that, to one so hopeful, and at the same time so practical, *there was very little motive of any kind to lead to a religious life.*"

At this time, she continues, "my theory of morals was, that to lie, steal, swear, quarrel, disobey parents and break the Sabbath, were sins for which I should feel guilty, but for not becoming a Christian, when I could not understand how to do it, never rested on my conscience as a sin, but was felt to be simply a misfortune." At twenty, the great grief and disappointment of her life occurred in the sudden death of her betrothed; and she was impressed with a sense of religious needs, and filled with a desire for religious peace, as never before. She struggled, and read, and prayed, that she might be accepted of God. At this time, she says, "I hoped for nothing, cared for nothing, but to become a Christian. *Yet no one could tell me intelligibly how to do it*, while it was clear that all expected nothing from my efforts, and that all was dependent on a divine afflatus that was to change the birth-gift of a depraved heart." And yet, all this time, when she was so wanting, and trying, and agonizing even, in the earnestness of her desire and effort to become a Christian,—at this very time, she says, "I was told the fault was all my own; that it was my obstinate *unwillingness* to do what was required that alone made it necessary for God to

interfere." At the same time, while thus perplexed and agonizing in her own fruitless desire to become a Christian, she was startled and horrified to find that her experience was but the experience of several of her dearest friends, whom she had esteemed as among the most thoughtful and excellent of the earth. "These revelations," she says, "took away all hope of any good from any farther efforts of mine. At this period, I almost lost my reason. For some days, I thought I should go distracted. The first decided "change of mind" I now recall, was an outburst of indignation and abhorrence. I remember once rising, as I was about to offer my usual, now hopeless, prayer, with a feeling very like this—that such a God did not deserve to be loved; that I would not love Him if I could, and I was glad I did not!"*

Such an experience,—the experience of one, remember, who had been most favorably circumstanced—the daughter of Dr. Beecher, one of the ablest and acutest minds of the time, and ready to give his children all the light and aid that any one of similar faith could give—such an experience, I say, needs no words of mine to emphasize its meaning, or to urge upon you its lessons upon the point now before us. I find it difficult to understand how any intelligent person can read such a revelation, and still believe that a doctrine productive of *such* results can be any part of that Gospel, which God has given to awaken conscience, and show His children the way home to Him.

In contrast with this experience of one so desiring

* "Common Sense applied to Religion."

to find acceptance with God, but thus perplexed, thwarted, and discouraged by the doctrine of Total Depravity and its associate doctrines—a revelation that doubtless opens to us the spiritual history of millions, consider now the experience of one believing our doctrine of Human Nature, and encouraged by it to strive after growth in the Christian life. In this, there is nothing to confuse or perplex. Every thing is intelligible, and in accordance with common sense. Every desire for an amended or ascending life, we are given to understand, is but the self-assertion of that image of Himself in which God has created us; and we have but to go forward, we are assured, using the means which are always at our command, to strengthen what is best, and to subdue what is worst in us, to find ourselves aided by the Holy Spirit that is always ready to bless us, and thus growing in purity, in a sense of God's presence, in an experience of His peace, and in the assurance of His acceptance. How simple and natural the Religious Life and the work of spiritual growth thus becomes! And how much more favorable to piety and to moral endeavor *our* doctrine of Human Nature is thus manifestly shown to be!

One word on another point, not often thought of, to this same effect. There are times when the victim of evil habit, struggling and yearning for deliverance, feels disheartened, and ready to say, It is of no use to try. What word of encouragement has the doctrine of Total Depravity for such an one, or how can a conviction of the truth of this doctrine affect such an one, except to confirm him in his discouragement, and to

incline him to regard himself as worthless and lost? But our doctrine of Human Nature says to every one in such a case, Fight on, O soul, and you shall triumph. You have that within you stronger than all vicious habits,—mightier than all the forces of sin; and made in God's image and precious in His sight, you can never be irretrievably lost. You are able, and destined, through Christ as your helper, to conquer. Take him as your helper, and conquer *now*. How different must be the effect of *such* a word from that spoken by the doctrine of Total Depravity! If here is a man battling with the waves for his life, which will do most for him, and help him to be most—to stand on the shore and shout, You are weak and sinking;—you can do nothing for yourself, and will undoubtedly drown;—or, Ho, man, keep up a good heart; you are surely to be saved; you have strength to hold out, if you will; only use what God has given you, and trust in Him, and you'll come safe to land? Say, which will do most for him? I need not answer:—and on every account on which the latter message would do most for one in such a case, our doctrine of Human Nature has the advantage, as a power to encourage and strengthen souls for the mastery over sin.

And as the Practical Superiority thus belongs to our doctrine of Human Nature, in its bearings on the personal character of the believer, so, it is time now that I should pass to say

II. It belongs to it, no less, in its influence on our views and feelings towards others.

1. In the first place, *consider how much broader and tenderer are the sympathies which it enjoins and nurtures.* While the common doctrine bids us see in the great mass of mankind—certainly in all the sinful, those who are wholly corrupt, with nothing good in them, given over of God to Satan, and, undoubtedly, destined, as worthless, to people the realms of woe forever, we see all as God's children, with an untold opulence of spiritual powers within them,—worth recovering, — destined, certainly, to be recovered, and needing only to be quickened into the required effort, to show their kindred with God, and the wealth and worth of the nature He has given them.

Our doctrine of Human Nature suffers nothing like contempt — except of base character,—never of any man or woman, however base. It forbids distrust. It teaches us to say—

> 'I may not scorn the meanest thing
> That on the earth doth crawl.
> The slave who would not burst his chain,
> The tyrant in his hall,
> The vile oppressor who hath made
> The widowed mother mourn,
> Though soulless he may seem to stand,
> I cannot, dare not scorn.
> The darkest night that shrouds the sky
> Of beauty hath a share:
> The blackest heart hath sighs to tell
> That God still lingers there."

What has the common doctrine that can furnish any such instructions? or that can for a moment begin to

make us so conscious of the claims of humanity,—or so interest our affections in all who bear the human form,—or so broaden our sympathies towards them? One looking upon the world through the theory of the Church may be saddened to think that there are so many in a condition so hopeless; but this feeling of sadness is necessarily mitigated in precise proportion as one believes them corrupt and worthless in the sight of God. It is only as we hear God saying, "All souls are mine," and see in all something that still makes them His image, and as such, infinitely precious in His sight, that our sympathies become quickest and our affections most tender and fraternal towards them; only thus are we most rebuked for indifference or unkindness, and most incited to feel and to work in their behalf.

2. And this suggests that the Practical Superiority we are claiming, belongs to the social influence of our doctrine, in the second place, *because of its power to animate and encourage to effort for the sinful.* Take any poor sinful soul—a drunkard,—a criminal, who has been draggled in the dust and mire of wrong—and according to the doctrine of Total Depravity, what is he? A cinder from the furnace of being, out of which all substance of good is consumed;—a lump of corruption, that can be made morally worth anything only by a miracle of Divine power, and that, without this, must be cast away forever. And in such a view of the fallen one, what incentive, or encouragement have we to labor for his restoration?

But regard him, as our doctrine of Human Nature

presents him—as a jewel, however unwrought, or encased in the accretions of evil, of infinite worth in itself, and in God's sight;—as a precious soul, that has lost its way, or slipped by the roadside;—as a traveller, self-betrayed, or one that has fallen among thieves, who have stripped, and wounded, and left him half-dead, but with the breath of life, and all the rich and noble possibilities of a child of God still within him;—as one destined to be found and redeemed by him who came to seek and recover all the lost—and at once, how many motives appeal to us to labor for him! and how inexcusable we are if we do not persist in efforts for his recovery! The believer in Total Depravity may become discouraged in philanthropic and reformatory effort; but the Universalist, consistently with his doctrine of Human Nature, never. As long as there is life there is hope, because we see that there is always something good even in the soul farthest gone, or most deeply fallen,—some spark of the Divine life,—some remnant of God's image, which is yet to be sufficient to ensure its restoration to God, and its entrance into the inheritance of the redeemed. Others than Universalists, it is true, labor as if this were the fact; but who except Universalists have the warrant and the motive for it, in the doctrine of Human Nature which they cherish?

I will not further pursue the subject. Much more presses upon me to be said; but I have spoken as long as I ought — and with what has been suggested, you may be left, each for yourselves, to pursue the theme into further illustrations and applications. Enough, I

am sure, has been said to show that, whether we regard the subject in its individual or social relations, the practical advantage is altogether with our doctrine of Human Nature, and that it is efficient, as the doctrine of innate depravity never can be, to sharpen and intensify the sense of moral accountability; to nurture self-respect; to create a loathing of sin; to take away all excuses for religious neglect; to animate to Christian culture; to move the heart to a philanthropic interest in all men; and to urge to hopeful and persistent labor even for the soul that is feeblest and farthest out of the way.

Let us, then, appreciate the argument that is thus furnished for the truth of this better doctrine of Human Nature. Especially, let us illustrate its efficiency as a Practical Power, by honoring ourselves in lives that shall give best expression to the capacities and worth of the nature with which we are endowed, and by honoring mankind in the largeness of our sympathies, and the tenderness of our affections towards all who bear the image of God, and in readiness to give earnest and Christian labor for the good of man. And seeing in Christ the only perfect representative of our highest capacities, and the Helper only through whom can we attain to noblest manhood, or womanhood, let us learn of him and live in him—becoming strong through the inspirations of his example;—large and pure through the inflowing of his spirit;—and thus, through an increasing likeness to him, exhibit more of that image of God in which He has made us as immortal souls.

V.

Human Relationship.

"—— and all ye are brethren: . . . for One is your Father which is in Heaven."—Matthew xxiii. 8, 9.

Among the first questions likely to occur to a reflecting mind, on awakening to a consciousness of its wonderful being here, next to the questions, Who or what am I? and, What power has placed me here?—is the question, Who are these by whom I am surrounded? What are their relations to each other and to me?

Independent of Christianity, such inquiries have usually received only the narrowest solutions. Clans and nations have limited the idea of relationship. Occasionally, some man of broad nature seems to have risen into something like an apprehension of the unity of mankind, and to have interpreted their relations in the spirit of the old Roman, who said, "I am a man, and whatsoever concerns men concerns me." But these have been exceptional cases, and without Christianity, men have regarded each other—not as one race, but as many races and interests, without any organic connection, or absolute brotherhood, and related only as the intercourse and exigencies of society have established artificial relations between them. The infidel philosopher Hobbes even went so far as to lay it down as an axiom, "that whatsoever is consequent to a time of

war, when every man is enemy to every man, is consequent to the time wherein men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish"—thus pronouncing men, by nature, absolutely the enemies of each other.

Our present business, however, is not with opinions outside of Christianity, but with the Universalist doctrine of Human Relationship in contrast with the common theory. Our relations to each other, we shall all agree, are determined by our relations to God:—and the exposition of the common theory of Human Nature, given by the eminent authorities cited in our last discourse, sufficiently shows what are the natural relations of mankind to God, as thus defined. "It is the doom of all men," as one of the latest authorities quoted affirms, that they "commence existence out of fellowship with God," and "as having forfeited His favor;" —or, as the Westminster "Shorter Catechism," revised for use in Sabbath Schools, declares, "All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under His wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever." Accordingly, the theory is, that men are, by nature, out of God's spiritual family. Through the sin of Adam, we are spiritually orphanized, or made children of the devil. God is simply our Creator—as He is the Creator of the beasts, or as a mechanic is the creator of a machine; but we can claim no moral relationship to Him. "Man," says a popular writer belonging to this school of thought, defining our relations to God, "is only like God in being *less unlike Him*

than the stocks and stones, . . . or as the top of a molehill may be more like the sun than the bottom. *It is nearer*, without partaking any more of the nature of the sun!" By nature, then, according to this theory, we are related, through any connection we have with God, only as several houses, built by the same carpenter, or as brutes, the product of the same creative power, are related. For any nearer relationship, we must look to our common parentage in the father of lies.

But God, this theory continues, has been pleased, of His grace, to make provision for our introduction into His spiritual family. "By the propitiation of our Saviour, and the communication of his merit," eminent authority says, "sinners become adopted children of God." The Romans had a law, under which it was customary for those who had no children to adopt children into their family, who assumed their name and became entitled to all the privileges of those who were children by birth. And this, the theologians of the church would have us understand, substantially illustrates the manner in which men become the children of God, and so, spiritually, brethren. Orphanized, or children of the devil, by nature, through faith in Christ, we may have his righteousness imputed to us. Supernaturally regenerated by the power of God, our old nature is taken away and a new nature imparted, and henceforth, we are adopted into the Divine household, and become thus related as the sons and daughters of God. But only those thus, through faith and the imputation of Christ's merits, adopted into God's family, are His children, or brothers and sisters in any positive and spiritual sense:

—and as related to such, all others are aliens, having really nothing in common with them. Hence the distinction, with which we are so familiar, between "God's people," and "the world's people." Our race is thus divided in twain. A partition wall, high as heaven and deep as hell, is built up between the two sections—on the one side, the "saints," adopted of God and brethren and sisters in the Lord;—on the other side, the "sinners," outcasts, children of wrath, having neither part nor lot with the others.

This, then, is the Church's theory of Human Relationship:—a theory, let it thankfully be said, from which the moral nature of not a few, professing still to hold evangelical opinions, is revolting, and which, were such giving *their* theory, would, possibly, in some respects, be stated differently. But this is the old and genuine theory, logically and consistently stated; and such as would modify the statement do not represent the actual doctrines of the church squarely and logically put—only the rebellion of conscience and common sense against them, and the mongrel and inconsistent theories into which they are transformed, when softened, smoothed, and rounded to suit the advancing religious sentiment of the time.

I might adduce authorities indefinitely to show that I have stated the common theory correctly. I will content myself with reading from our neighbor, Rev. Dr. J. P. Thompson—distinguished as an exponent of so-called "liberal Orthodoxy."* He lays it down as one

* "*Love and Penalty: or, Eternal Punishment consistent with the Fatherhood of God.*"

of his fundamental propositions, that "*The high and sacred Fatherhood which the Gospel reveals, is a Fatherhood in Christ towards those who love Him, and not a general Fatherhood of indiscriminate love and blessing for the race;*" and he says, "There is a general sense in which God is styled the Father of mankind; viz., as the Author of their being and the providential Supporter of their life. In this sense, also, he is said to be the Father of lights—the author and head of the physical creation; and the Father of all creatures, as well as of the spirits of all flesh." (p. 117.) "But this general use of the term Father, to denote the Author and Supporter of life, does not carry with it those ideas of special kindness or parental favoritism, which some associate with the name. The privileges and promises which spring from the divine Fatherhood are pledged to those who by their personal character, as formed by divine grace, are brought into a special relation of filial love and obedience. Christ taught his *disciples* to pray 'Our Father.'" (p. 118.) "This filial relationship is always conditioned upon the renunciation of the world." (p. 119.) "Those who will not *make God their Father* by accepting His grace in Jesus Christ, must meet Him hereafter only as their Judge. God is a Father to as many as come to Him through Christ. He will be your Father if you will penitently and truly seek His grace." (p. 124.)

To this so-called evangelical theory of Human Relationship, ours stands opposed in every particular. Our interpretation of the doctrine of Christianity on this point can in no way be so well expressed, as in

our Lord's words in the text—"All ye are brethren; . . . . for One is your Father which is in Heaven." These words were spoken by our Lord to the disciples, of their relations to himself and the Father; but we believe they were designed to express a universal truth, and to explain the relations existing between all men, as brethren, and God as the common Father of the race. The universal Fatherhood of God and the universal Brotherhood of man, as we read the New Testament, are the central truths of the Gospel. As touching the essential relations of souls, therefore, we know of no orphans;—of no partition walls;—of no aliens or strangers;—and of no such monstrous thing as the Church means by adoption into God's family. Not by adoption, but by the necessities of spiritual being,—by the everlasting ties of nature and of moral paternity, all souls are God's children, we affirm:—and no sin, we believe, can strike its corrosions deep enough to make a child of God any thing but a child of God, and a brother and sister of all mankind. Humanity is one—externally broken, indeed, by the distinctions of nation and color, of condition and character, but in essence, only one—as any number of children born of the same parents are one; as the body with its many members is one. Wherever man meets man, no matter how widely differing in complexion, language, or character, there brother meets brother, and a brother's regard should be given, and, if need require, a brother's offices of help should be performed. The same blood runs through us all. The same common heart beats in us all. As the apostle says,

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female," but all are one—children of the same Father; partakers of the same nature; the redeemed of the same Lord; travellers to the same final Home, where, at length, we shall all be gathered,

> "No wanderer lost—
> A family in Heaven."

Here, then, we have the prevalent doctrine and *our* doctrine of Human Relationship in contrast. I will not stop now to characterize the former, as it seems to me to deserve; nor will I ask you to compare the two, and say which is the more consistent, reasonable, probable,—or which the better accords with our sympathetic instincts,—or which is the more in keeping with the character and government of a God, of whom Christ constantly speaks as "the Father," and whom he describes as impartial in His love,—kind even to the unthankful and the evil. The temptation is strong to indulge in such a digression; but confining myself to the business immediately in hand, let me ask you, simply, to look at the two, and say which, practically, is fitted to exert the healthier influence; to make men most to each other; and to do most for the cultivation of a broad and genial spirit of brotherhood, and for the furtherance of Christian ends. *We* say, ours, evidently—and for several reasons.

1. *It brings men closer together, and, through the assurance of their essential unity, fosters wider and more*

positive sympathies and a deeper sense of common interests. The great difficulty of the world, socially, has always been that men are too far apart. There has been too much individualism;—too much selfishness;—too much acting, each one for himself, as if each one's interests were distinct from all the rest, or, too often, as if they could be best promoted only by preying on the interests of others. Hence, the divisions and contentions,—the classes and castes,—the jealousies, antagonisms and fierce competitions,—the readiness to deceive, to take advantage of weakness or ignorance, and to practice imposition, fraud, and oppression, which have always, more or less, marked the social relations of mankind. Not that, as Hobbes theorized, men are naturally enemies to each other; but an undue selfishness has caused them to pursue their own ends, without sufficiently regarding the rights or interests of others.

This state of things, it is one of the chief aims of Christianity to correct; but this state of things it is the direct office of the prevalent doctrine of Human Relationship to encourage and promote. What is needed is a consciousness of positive relationship;—a feeling that we are bound up in the same great bundle of being together, and that the interest of each is identical with the interest of all;—in one word, a spirit of brotherhood. But what is there in the prevalent doctrine of Human Relationship to beget, or even to authorize, any such feeling? As we are born, indeed, according to this doctrine, we are brothers and sisters in a common bondage to evil; but once adopted as God's children, we have nothing in common with those on the

other side of the wall. They are not in God's family, and we have no kindred with them—our nature being regenerate and sanctified, and theirs unregenerate and corrupt. *There is no such thing as an absolute universal brotherhood.* What must the effect of such ideas be but, inevitably, so far as they really affect character, to divide men?—to narrow and localize sympathy?—to foster prejudices?—and to perpetuate the very state of things which it is the labor of Christianity to discountenance and overcome?

Try the case here among yourselves. Let this Church represent the world, and suppose yourselves shut in here, to live and to die. And now, let the idea prevail among you, that you are related by nature only as the heirs of a common corruption, but that some of you have, by adoption, become the children of God, and, therefore, brethren, while all the rest are outcasts and aliens, foreigners from God and foreigners from those adopted into His family:—and what will be the effect? Will it not be to estrange and sunder you? Will it not be to forbid any feeling of brotherhood, and to prevent any idea of a mutual interest? Won't affection be stifled and narrowed? Won't sympathy and coöperation be hindered? And if you are not led to think each one for himself, without regard to others, will there not be clans and clannish feuds and jealousies among you, which will make your relations any thing but cordial, fraternal, or Christian?

But alter the supposition. Amidst your jealousies and feuds, let the conviction grow among you that you are all members of one family,—alike children of the same

God,—with the same common interests, and that the good of one can in no way be so well promoted as by the promotion of the good of all :—and to the same extent in which this conviction really takes possession of you, will not all your relations become harmonized, and a family feeling be made to pervade all your hearts, and a spirit of brotherhood and of mutual service show itself in all your dealings and actions?

Or, take another illustration : Here are two men disputing, or aiming to impose upon, or to overreach, each other. They are strangers—or are known to each other only as the associations of business have brought them together. How can you best induce them to desist from their dispute, or evil designs, and melt them into love and sympathy? By telling them that one is an adopted child of God, and the other a child of Satan? By telling them that they partake in common of a corrupt and wicked nature, and are probably bound to the same destiny of endless woe? By telling them even that God has been graciously pleased to adopt them both into His family? Or, by telling them that they are brothers—by no artificial ties of adoption, but in intrinsic nature, and by an equal relation to God,—that what is for the interest of one is for the interest of both, and that they are linked together as members one of another for time and eternity? Need I say which of these assurances, actually realized, will awaken their best affections, and lead them to grasp hands in fraternal regard, and in a mutual desire to deal kindly and justly together?

The trouble now is that men do not know each

other; do not recognize the family likeness; do not feel the force of family ties linking them together, and drawing upon their hearts. Hence, the absence of the family spirit. And it has ever been the weakness, as it is the condemnation, of the prevalent doctrine of Human Relationship, that, as we have seen, it has nothing to encourage this family spirit, but that its entire tendency has been in the opposite direction. The only hope of the world, socially, is in this doctrine of ours, re-affirming the doctrine that fell from the lips of Christ. Its work is to reveal men to each other; to show to every man a brother in every other man—whether he be king or beggar,—black or white,—criminal or saint; to bring men close enough together to hear the beating of each other's hearts, and to feel the vibration of that electric chord of sympathy, which runs through all human souls and links them into one.

You have seen, all of you, specimens of what we call coral, perforated with cavities, which give it something the appearance of a honey-comb. I once attended an interesting lecture, during which the lecturer exhibited such a specimen, and told us that what we call coral is but the skeleton of the living creature; that, in a state of life, each of these cavities is inhabited by a distinct individual; and yet, he said, the individuals are so connected that the mass, however large, is but one organic creature,—feeling a touch or injury at any point throughout the whole. And as the lecturer exhibited his specimen, and told us that an injury inflicted *here*, would be felt *there*, and

throughout the entire mass, I could not but think how exquisitely God had symbolized in this, almost the lowest form of life, the organic unity of our race, illustrating the meaning of the apostle, when he says that "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another; and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." In the light of such an illustration, we see a new meaning in Whittier's fine words—

> "The warp and woof of all destinies
> Are woven fast,
> Linked in sympathy, like the keys
> Of an organ vast.
> Pluck but one thread, and the web you mar;
> Break but one
> Of a thousand keys, and the paining jar
> Through all will run."

What, socially, does the world need so much as that men should be made conscious of such an organic unity? And to educate them into such a consciousness, — to tear down the partition-walls which now divide them, — to destroy the unnatural distinctions which are interrupting the kindly flow of their sympathies, and thus to bring them together, feeling their brotherhood, and true to it—*this* is the work of our doctrine of Human Relationship;—a work which no other doctrine has the power to do, and on account of its fitness for which, the superiority of this doctrine as a Practical Power must be conceded by all.

II. Our doctrine has this Practical Superiority, also,

as a more effectual rebuke of exclusiveness and spiritual pride. The disposition to lord it over God's heritage, — to put on airs of superior sanctity, — to arrogate the privilege of standing in special nearness to God, and the right, therefore, to despise and separate themselves from others, and to gather their garments about them to avoid contact with the unclean, saying, "Stand by thyself: for I am holier than thou,"—this has ever been one of the besetting sins of the religious class, *as a class.* It has done more than almost any thing else, to occasion the entire absence of sympathy between what is called the church, and the world, and to cause religion to be regarded as a thing of sanctimonious pretence, rather than as a vital goodness.

The Pharisees of old furnish a good type of this kind of piety. And what made them what they were? They did not believe in Human Brotherhood. They thought themselves the special favorites of God, and looked on all who were not like themselves as alien from Him, or as far less esteemed in His sight. *They* were the saints, broadly separated from Gentile dogs, and publicans, and sinners:—and their exclusiveness and spiritual arrogance,—their haughty and supercilious disgust of all whom they accounted sinners, and their constant fault-finding with Christ because he was willing to minister to them,—their boastfulness and self-righteousness, so keenly pictured and rebuked in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican—all these were but the legitimate results of the ideas they cherished. And yet, will any one of you tell me in what respect their ideas as to their relations to God

and to the world, essentially differed from the doctrine of the Church concerning Human Relationship, as cherished to-day? There is no difference in substance, however there may be in form. Hence, the similarity of results produced. The so-called evangelical type of religion to-day, as always, is a Pharisaic type of religion:—a religion that talks of "God's people" and of "the world's people;"—a religion that puts on airs of superiority,—and turns up its nose at heretics, carefully gathering up its robes lest they should touch them, and priding itself on the special favor of God;—a religion that haughtily holds itself aloof from the world, and assumes to dispense its patronage, or to "give the cold shoulder" to whomsoever it will, and that, with cool assurance, talks of "we, the saints," and "you, the sinners."

A Christian brother*—one of our best ministers, and one of the world's purest and noblest men, was excluded, not long ago, from what was called "a Union prayer-meeting," virtually on the ground that he was not one of "God's people," and that he could come into such a meeting only as a subject of conversion, with no right to take part in it for the conversion of others; and whenever a so-called evangelical minister, or church-member, talks with one of another faith, or with one who is not a church-member, it is almost invariably—there are occasionally genial and refreshing exceptions, but, as the rule, it is as if there were a great distance between them;—as if he or she, the minister or the church-member, were a long way above us—a

* Rev. A. J. Patterson, of Portsmouth, N. H.

good deal nearer God; — as if we were heathen, straight on the road to hell, and they were saints,— members of God's cabinet, stooping to plead with us not to be damned! And this only illustrates the whole tone and spirit of too much of the piety of those who call themselves the evangelical people of God. It is a piety of assumption,—of separatism,—of spiritual pride, and, to no small extent, of self-righteousness, that esteems itself to be righteous and despises others; a piety that reads the Bible even as if all God's promises and words of tenderness were for itself, and that appropriates the broad and universal declarations of truth as intended only for its saintly caste!

Do not so far misunderstand me as to suppose that I find any pleasure in saying these things, or that I say them for the sake of saying them, or in any unkindness of feeling towards those concerned. I say them sorrowfully—as things known to you all, and as things necessary to be said to illustrate the fruits of the prevalent Church doctrine of Human Relationship. I do not wonder that things should be so. I do not know that I really blame any one that they are so. The tone and spirit thus assumed and exhibited are the right tone and spirit, if this theory of Human Relationship is true,—the only tone and the only spirit which our brethren and friends should exhibit, or which can be justified in them:—and my only wonder is that this type of piety is not more presumptuous, and that there are so many genial and liberal men and women as there are among those sympathizing with these ideas. But who can tell the mischief that this spirit of assumption

—of religious pride and pretentious arrogance, has done and is doing in the world—in separating men,—in breaking society up into cliques and fragments,—in fostering exclusiveness,—in making neighborly intercourse and offices of charity dependent on the color of one's faith, or the position of one's sect,—and so in making religion a butt of the scoffing and the sport of the profane, weakening and destroying its power for good?

Need I say how entirely different our faith is fitted to make all these things? *This* does not overlook any distinctions there may be in character, or count them as of no importance. It specially emphasizes these distinctions. But it tells us that whatever our character—saints or sinners, we are all God's children;—all partakers of one nature;—all brethren of one family;—all destined through penitence and the love of God to the same home;—that no difference of character can make any difference in absolute relations, or justify any other than a spirit of the tenderest interest and the warmest sympathy. "Where is boasting, then?" What ground is there for arrogance, or pride, or any feeling of intrinsic superiority in the sight of God, or in our relations to one another? Pride is rebuked. Arrogance and assumption are forbidden. Self-righteousness is made impossible; and whatever difference of character there may be between us and others, the only feeling we can have is a feeling of thankfulness for whatever virtue we may, through God's help, have attained; a feeling of grief that our brethren and sisters, just as dear in God's sight and

worth just as much in themselves as we are, should be in any respect less virtuous; and a feeling of joy that the time is coming when they, too, shall be awakened to know God and themselves, and through Christ, be quickened into a life of faith and love, and be glad in the Lord with us for ever. But

III. Our doctrine of Human Relationship has the Practical Superiority, *as an inspiration to moral and philanthropic labor for the good of man.* It has ever been the misfortune of the world, that men have been disposed to limit their charities and kindly offices and ministeries of help to family, sect, color, or nation. Man simply *as man* has not had that consideration to which he is entitled. Lying stripped and half-dead by the way, priests and Levites, lovers of color or of class have looked on him, and failing to see the sign which demands their interest, have passed by on the other side. And if there is any thing in the popular theory of Human Relationship to induce a different state of things, I confess I would be glad to know what it is—for I do not perceive it. Encouraging some to account themselves God's children, adopted into special favoritism with Him, this theory tells such to regard others as outcasts from God, worthless, unless they can be brought to believe after a certain form and to join a certain Church, and so be saved from a future endless hell. Why, then, should they do for such? What wonder if the question concerning the fallen, or suffering, assumes a sectarian form, and asks, Do they belong to our Church, or believe our creed, or are they going

to heaven, or can they be induced to go to heaven, our way? Or, what wonder, human nature being what it is, that if these questions must be answered in the negative, the work to be done for them should be left to Samaritans, or outsiders, who care less for creeds or sects, and think only of man and of his present succor and deliverance?

I know that there have been, and that there are, large and noble souls, superior to all such limitations, who, while professing the common creed, talk of God as the Father of all, and are interested in all humane and philanthropic labor. I would not seem to overlook or forget them. I honor them. I thank God that there are so many of them—superior to the narrowing influence of their creed, and carrying great and generous hearts in their bosoms, notwithstanding. But they take counsel of their large hearts, and not of their narrow creed. What I am speaking of is the *tendency* of the received theory of Human Relationship, and of the naturalness of the results that are not seldom witnessed in connection with it.

And let me ask, as still further illustrating the point I am making, whether you have never observed how few of the so-called evangelical ministers and prominent church-members are actively interested in moral and philanthropic labor—except as they can make it tributary to some sectarian or so-called religious end? I do not know how it is here in New York. I have not lived here long enough to become familiar with the facts. But in all the communities in which I have before lived, and where I have had opportunities to

know the facts, the active laborers for moral reform—those who have been the working men in the cause of Temperance, and in the Anti-Slavery cause,—those who have wrought against the Gallows, and for the amelioration of criminal law,—those who have been the most forward and earnest men and women in charitable societies, and in all purely humanitarian effort, have not, to any extent, been the so-called evangelical ministers and church-members of those communities, but those in sympathy with quite another doctrine of Human Nature and Human Relationship. I have been somewhat conversant, during the past twenty years, with escaped slaves, and with colored men; and their invariable testimony has been that, among no other classes, have they found such a readiness to recognize their humanity, and to render them aid, on the simple ground that they were men and women, without regard to any questions of theology or of sect, as among Universalists and Unitarians — especially among the ministers: and who, familiar with its history, does not remember how the so-called evangelical religionists of the country — *as a class* — withheld themselves from the Washingtonian Reform, when they found that they could not control it for proselyting or sectarian ends?*

* Reading the above to Rev. Dr. Sawyer, for so many years the faithful standard-bearer of Universalism in New York City, he informed me that one of the leading Washingtonians in the city assured him, that the so-called evangelical ministers were among the greatest obstacles in their work; and Dr. Sawyer added, still further, that, with the exception of two or three Methodist clergymen, no such minister could be found in New York to address a Washingtonian meeting.

I say these things in no invidious spirit, but, as I just remarked, simply to indicate the fact that it is not in connection with the usual theory of Human Relationship that we are to look for the most work done for man as man — without regard to theological or sectarian ends or uses.

The same thing has been said by others. Rev. Dr. Thompson, a distinguished Methodist minister, late of Ohio, visited Boston, some three or four months since, and writing of the various churches there, to the Methodist *Advocate and Journal*, said, "The Protestant churches of Boston rank as to numbers in the following order, viz., Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians and Episcopalians. The Unitarians are the most wealthy, and it is but just to say that *they are the most active and liberal in all public enterprises.* No scheme of education, or charity, or improvement lacks their hearty sympathy and support. Indeed, *they are the chief hope of the poor around them.*" A larger acquaintance with the facts would have led Dr. Thompson to include the Universalists, as, according to their means and numbers, equally deserving of mention in this connection as the Unitarians. To the same effect, also, a good Baptist deacon, in South Boston, once said, to justify the service of a protracted meeting at the same time as a charity lecture, "We are engaged in converting men to religion; the Unitarians and Universalists will look after the poor."

Now, I do not, by any means, appropriate for Universalists and Unitarians *all* that seems to be thus implied,—for it would not be true nor just. But this

latter remark illustrates the stand-point from which it is the tendency of the prevalent views to induce their believers to look at this subject. It is *our* work, their doctrine naturally educates them to feel, to save those who can be saved from hell, and to look after such: Let others attend to the purely moral and philanthropic work of the world—the work that aims to make men temperate, free, virtuous, comfortable and happy here. Hence, the fact, known to all who have any acquaintance with the subject, that our reforms and philanthrophic efforts have not, usually, originated in the Church, or been carried forward at first by the so-called religious class. Originating, for the most part, outside of this circle, they have been taken hold of by the Church only when they have come to command attention, and when the opportunity has thus appeared to use them for theological or sectarian ends:—o that Henry Ward Beecher once said that the Church, in its relations to all such movements, was like the baggage-wagons, lumbering along behind an army, instead of acting the part of the vanguard, leading the march.

Wholly different is the state of things brought about by *our* doctrine of Human Relationship, so far as it really becomes an element of life. "Our neighbor," *this* tells us,

> "is the suffering man
> Though at the farthest pole."

Our brethren and sisters, all these are who need to be aided or reformed;—our brothers and sisters, all

these drunken and brutalized ones, destroying themselves, and making all connected with them wretched ;—our brothers and sisters, these gamblers and debauchees, forgetting all moral obligation and spending life in sin ;—our brother, that murderer with his hands reddened with the blood of his fellow-man ;—our brothers and sisters, these millions of slaves, pining in their chains, and crying, O God, how long?—or, worse still, content to be slaves ;—our brothers and sisters, all these abandoned, vile, or suffering ones,—God's children, part and parcel of us, calling upon us, though they speak not, for the succor and help they need. Their degradation is our degradation. Their suffering is our suffering. Every stripe on the back of a slave is a stripe on our own. Every indignity or wrong heaped on a human being is an indignity or wrong against us, and as such is our personal concern. And for the sake of our common humanity, wherever there is want, or weakness, or degradation, or woe,—with no questions to ask about color, or creed,—with no thought to indulge about salvation from the wrath of God and a future endless hell, we are bidden to give the sympathy and help required—assured that he or she to whom it is given is deserving of it, and that whatever is done in any way to bless men, is so much done to lift them into that spiritual elevation, in which alone the soul is most blessed, and unto which all are at some time to attain. Is it needful, then, that we should pursue the subject further, to see the Practical Superiority of Universalism in this respect?

My friends, it is a great theme—this to which our attention has thus been given. I am painfully conscious how inadequate to it are these words I have spoken. I should find it difficult,—nay, quite impossible to express to you my sense of the importance of this doctrine of Human Brotherhood, in itself, or as a regenerative force in the world. Very sad and very dark the world is, as we look out upon it, and think of the strifes and divisions,—of the differences of race and character and condition,—of the wars and oppressions and rivalries and wrongs, that make up so much of its history. But with the light of this great truth, shining upon it from the Fatherhood of God and the Cross of Christ, what a different aspect it wears!—and how pleasant it is to see that, after all, there are no strangers, no foreigners here!—that it is all one family, and that these strifes and wrongs and differences are but temporary disturbances among those who have not yet known each other as brothers and sisters, but who are thus to know each other, and who are yet to dwell together in fraternal love and harmony! See what the spirit of Brotherhood has done—as it has gone forth from the life and truth of Christ, despite the errors which have obscured and denied it! See the hospitals it has built! See the institutions of mutual help it has created! See the laws it has softened and refined! See the hearts it has enlarged, and the souls it has consecrated to the service of humanity! See the evils it has mitigated; the fallen it has lifted up; the sinful it has reformed; the suffering it has relieved; the slaveries it has abolished; the thrones of oppression it has undermined;

the closer relationship into which it has brought mankind; the generous sympathies it has fostered, and the genial influences it has diffused through society and into all human affairs!

And if this has been done while the fact of Human Brotherhood has been denied by the Church, what may we not expect as this fact comes to be generally perceived, and this doctrine of Christ—"Ye are all brethren, for one is your Father which is in Heaven," goes forth fully apprehended, to work its legitimate results in the Church and in the world! How different will become the relations of those who call themselves Christians, and instead of the bigotry and intolerance and sectarian bitterness now seen, how will the world be blessed by their toleration, charity, and brotherly love! How different will be the social relations and practices of men! There will be no more rumsellers, when rumsellers feel that their victims are their brothers. There will be no more holding of God's image as a chattel, and no more buying and selling of souls as cattle, when the slaveholder perceives his own brothers and sisters in his slaves. There will be no more fighting or war when nations realize their kindred, and soldiers feel that they are brethren. There will be no more grinding of the faces of the poor,—no more meanness or oppression on the part of the employer towards the employed,—no more deceit, or fraud, when men and women see in each other, not simply in theory, but in fact, those who are members of themselves, and realize that if one suffer, all suffer, and if one be blessed all are blessed.

It is the moral distinction of our time, that this fact of Human Brotherhood is more than ever before asserting itself in life, in business, and in law; and fitting it is that, on this first Sabbath of the year, in presence of this Table of the Lord, and talking of the Fraternity of the Race, we should rejoice in all these triumphs of the spirit of brotherhood in the Past, and gratefully accept them as but earnests of its yet grander triumphs in the Future. Fitting especially is it that, here and now, occupied with such a theme, amidst the sanctities of this House of God, the Universal Father, in presence of these memorials of him who died for all, we should devoutly hail as one of these triumphs, that PROCLAMATION OF FREEDOM, which, however compelled, has, at length, used the nation's sword to cut the Gordian knot of our politics, and made *the first day of January*, 1863, one of the golden milestones along the centuries, memorable henceforth in our history, as the hour when the chains which have so long been clanking to our dishonor were broken,—when the brotherhood of the slave we have despised and trampled was practically confessed, and when three millions of human chattels were transformed into citizens, and solemnly invested with the rights of men.

Let us catch the inspiration of the hour and the subject. If I am speaking to one, in whose convictions Human Brotherhood has not heretofore been held as a primary and absolute fact, shall not what has now been said lead you, my friend, to such a reinvestigation of the subject as will give new and larger meaning for you to Christ's words, "All ye are brethren; for one

is your Father which is in Heaven?" And realizing the importance and the power of this fact of Brotherhood, my Universalist friend,—realizing, especially, our obligations as the representatives of the doctrine which most broadly and effectually asserts it, shall we not more sedulously nurture its spirit in our hearts, and seek to make our lives larger, nobler, more disinterested in sincere loyalty to it? Let us do so—for in vain do we talk of the Practical Superiority of our doctrine, if we do not show it by more positively honoring man *as man*, and in our broader and more active sympathies, and our more prompt and generous charities and labors of love.

VI.

Regeneration.

"But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."—Eph. iv. 20–24.

That the doctrine of Regeneration, or the new-birth, is a cardinal doctrine of the Gospel, and that the process or experience thus designated is essential to transform one from a condition of unbelief, or sin, into a condition of Christian faith and character, is not only admitted, but is expressly affirmed alike by all professed Christians. Opinions differ only as to the *nature* of this process or experience.

Starting with the idea of Total Depravity, the prevalent theology is compelled to a theory of Regeneration which makes *us* passive, and *it* supernatural. If we are born intrinsically corrupt, "incapable," as the authoritative expounders of this doctrine of Depravity say, "either of thinking or doing any good thing," "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil," of course, and necessarily, in order that we may become at all acceptable to God, our corrupt nature must be sup-

planted by a new and better nature,—we must be spiritually re-created, born anew, in respect to the substance of our moral being; and since man has no power thus to re-create himself, and is incapable of willing or working to be good, even if he had this power, it follows, also, necessarily, that the change must be wrought independently of us, without act or agency of ours, according to the pleasure and by the omnipotent power of God. And this is the process, accordingly, which is commonly alleged to be the new-birth. It is "a change of heart," we are told;—by which is meant a radical change of nature, towards which we can do nothing ourselves, supernaturally and instantaneously wrought by the direct action of God.

Subtle and scholastic thinkers, dealing sharply with the metaphysics of the subject, or seeing what is involved in such a position, may, indeed, shrink from this idea of a literal re-creation, and may say that the new-birth is "not a change of nature, but a new life acting upon and through human nature,"—"the commencement of holiness in the soul." There have been those who have said this among the oracles of the church;—there are those who say it among the adherents of the old theology now. But this does not meet the demand of what is assumed in the doctrine of Total Depravity—if any thing corresponding to these terms be still held as truth. The doctrines of Total Depravity and Miraculous Regeneration are the necessary complements of each other. They stand or fall together. We saw, in the discourse on Human Nature,

that no modification in the statement of the former doctrine can save one from the necessity of believing all that is most offensive in its old statements, if any thing like a supernatural new-birth is affirmed. The converse of this proposition is equally true. If the terms Total Depravity be not entirely emptied of meaning, and used simply to conjure with, in the seeming maintenance of a doctrine really abandoned, then, as we have seen, this theory of re-creation, of an actual change of nature, is logically necessitated. And as the fact, whatever the qualifications made by a few exceptional thinkers, this is the form in which the doctrine of Regeneration is commonly taught, and in which it is almost universally held by the mass of so-called evangelical believers.

To this, let these authorities witness. I will read first from the Westminster Catechism, revised for use in Congregational Sunday Schools: "*Q.* How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ? *A.* We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by the Holy Spirit. *Q.* How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ? *A.* The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in an effectual calling. *Q.* What is effectual calling? *A.* Effectual calling is a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the

Gospel. . . . *Q.* What is sanctification? *A.* Sanctification is a work of God's Spirit whereby we are *renewed in the whole man* after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness." The Presbyterian "Catechism for Young Children," from which I have before quoted, says:—"*Q.* What kind of a heart have you by nature? *A.* A heart filled with all unrighteousness. *Q.* Hath God promised you a new heart . . . ? *A.* Yes. *Q.* Can you of yourself reform and renew your wicked heart? *A.* No; I am *dead* in trespasses and sins. *Q.* What, then, can change and melt your rebellious, hard, and stony heart? *A.* Nothing but God's almighty power and free grace. . . . *Q.* Cannot your good thoughts, words, or actions recover you by the covenant of works? *A.* No: every thing I do is sinful. . . . *Q.* Can you believe and repent of yourself? *A.* No: faith and repentance are the gift of God." Our Methodist friends, in their "Catechism No. 2," teach as follows: "*Q.* What is regeneration or the new-birth? *A.* It is that great change which God works in the soul when He raises it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. It is the change wrought in the whole soul by the Almighty, when *it is created anew* in Christ Jesus, when it is renewed after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness. *Q.* What follows from our regeneration or being born again? *A.* Then our sanctification being begun, *we receive power* to grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ, and to live in the exercise of inward and outward holiness." Still other authorities might be cited;

but these are sufficient to show in what form this doctrine of Regeneration is popularly taught, and thus to justify the account I have given of it.

From this theory, however qualified, or in whatever terms expressed, we entirely dissent. Having no faith in the essential depravity of Human Nature, we have no faith in any such miraculous re-creation or change of our nature as this doctrine necessitates. It is not our nature, but our *character* that is sinful, we believe,—as was shown in the discourse on this subject. What the New Testament means by the new-birth, therefore, we affirm, is—*not a change of nature*, but *an amendment of character*. The Apostle states our doctrine exactly in the text;—in no other words can it be better stated:—"Put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In other words, Regeneration is *the christianization of souls;* the transformation of character from a condition of unbelief and sin into harmony with God:—wrought by no special or supernatural act of God, but by the awakening and sanctifying power of truth, as the result of our faith and choice and Christian effort. God has given us the means in Christ and the Gospel, and is with us to help and bless us in the use of these means by the influences of the Holy Spirit—as He is always with us to help us in every right endeavor; but it is for us to believe and obey, and thus to use these means, in the desire to "put off the old man" and to "put on

the new man:"—and as we do so, penetrated and wrought upon by the power of the truth, new and better thoughts, tastes, loves, and aims, more and more possess us;—the bent, the entire direction of our wills and purposes is changed, leading us to renounce all that is low, or mean, or impure, and more and more conforming us into the image of our Master, "in righteousness and true holiness." And this, we believe, is what the New Testament means by Regeneration;—as one of our late writers has said, "that renewal of the soul whereby a new and divine life is made to fill it and work out in it a saintly character." It differs from Conversion as the whitening process in the bleaching of linen differs from the commencement of that process; as the growth of a germ differs from its quickening; as the prosecution of a journey differs from starting upon it. Conversion is the crisis, the turning-point in one's spiritual experience; the kindling of affection and the change of purpose in which the prodigal resolves to leave his husks, and says, as he faces homeward, "I will arise and go to my father:"—Regeneration is the ripening of the experience thus begun, in the gradual clarifying of character;—the travel of the prodigal away from his old haunts, tastes, and habits towards that acceptance by his father, in which he shall be welcomed as one redeemed.

And this being our Universalist doctrine of Regeneration, its Practical Superiority over the more prevalent theory is manifest for a variety of reasons.

I. It has this superiority, *because it commends itself*

to us as more in accordance with our daily observation as a real thing. There are many persons who are made utterly infidel in respect to this whole subject, and who are accustomed to regard all talk about Regeneration as so much talk about a thing that never actually occurs, on account of the absence—in most cases, the utter absence—of any indications of the change of nature alleged in so-called regenerate persons. A change of *nature—any* change that God would interpose to work in us by the direct and supernatural exercise of His almighty power, it needs no words to show, must necessarily make the subjects of it essentially different persons from what they were before, and from those about them, in whom no such change has been wrought. If not, wherein would be the advantage or the evidence of the change? But, do we, as the fact, find those who actually show themselves to be thus different? Marked changes in character *do* certainly sometimes occur; and I hold it to be undeniable that, while there are persons of many estimable qualities who care nothing for religion, we must look to those of religious lives to find the highest average of manly and womanly character. But, if this doctrine of a change of nature—or if any thing, in the remotest degree analogous to it, be true, we ought to be able to say a great deal more than this. Not only should there be no such thing as declension, or backsliding, ever known among these professedly changed persons, but they should be every where signalized as a higher and purer order of beings,—as destitute of inclination or power to do a mean thing, or a wrong thing, as they

were, before their change, to do any thing acceptable to God. *Are* they thus signalized? Do we not all know that the men and women who think themselves, or who are thought by others, to have been "born again," or to have "experienced a change," in the sense in which these expressions are commonly employed, are, on the whole, about the same *kind* of men and women as the rest of us? Do they not love money and give themselves to material and worldly pursuits about like others? Do they not get angry,—and harbor resentment,—and yield to covetousness,—and indulge in envy and jealousy, as if they were still "the world's people?" Can you not find among them—and often among those quoted as patterns of piety, those as narrow, as sordid, as selfish, as fractious, as mean, as hard at a bargain, as any of the "unregenerate" multitude?

You all know how these questions must be answered; and the fact that they must be so answered, demonstrating that no such change as is theoretically assumed can have occurred in this so-called regenerate class, renders the whole thing, in the eyes of a large number of persons, a perfect farce,—a thing of mere empty pretence, and thus brings the very name of religion into suspicion, and sometimes into contempt. Not a few thoughtful persons—persons who would otherwise be reverent and religiously inclined,—educated in this common view of Regeneration, have been disgusted and repelled from all religious sympathy, or interest, by the broad contrast between the high-sounding talk of those professedly "born again," and their daily actions. Religion is thus made to seem to them only a

synonyme of cant. They have no desire to enrich themselves with its influences, and no concern except to keep as far away from it, and to have as little to do with it, as possible. Have you not known such persons? Possibly there are those present, who could give this as the explanation of their skepticism or indifference.

All this, *our* doctrine guards against. Teaching us to understand that Regeneration is no change of nature, but a simple change of character,—wrought by no miracle of God's power, but by the natural operations of truth in the soul, according to the measure of one's faith and moral earnestness, it easily explains the fact that those who profess to be Christians should halt, and backslide, and have their imperfections, and their sins, even, like every body else. Few intelligent, and no candid, persons will deny that Christianity *does* chasten and purify those who really believe and obey it,—rectifying their wills,—imparting new principles of action, and, in the ratio of faith and obedience, morally revolutionizing the whole being. This moral revolution, so far as it occurs,—this chastening and purifying process, *our* doctrine instructs us, is the Regeneration which Christ enforces and requires as the condition of his discipleship: and summoning all observers to recognize the importance and reality of this process, so far as it takes place, this doctrine of ours says to them, Do not be surprised that Christian men and women should still be imperfect, for this rectifying work of the Gospel in them is a gradual work; accept what is done as the earnest of its power to do still more; and, since

you cannot, in candor, fail to see, or be willing to deny, that some good is accomplished, seek, yourselves, to be thus wrought upon and amended by this rectifying and purifying power.

And able as our doctrine is thus to explain why Christians are not more perfect, without compromising the reality of religion, or reflecting at all against the genuineness of their religious experience, we claim that it has greatly the advantage, practically, over the common theory. This has no such explanation, but, as I have shown, as those said to be miraculously changed are seen to be little or no better, morally, than those who claim no such change, it compels a large class of thoughtful minds to suspect that religion is simply a form, or an artificial excitement of feeling, and turns them from it in skepticism and indifference, —often in disgust. But

II. Our doctrine of Regeneration has this practical advantage, *because it cultivates a broader sense of the meaning and purpose of a Religious Life.* The natural,—in most cases, the inevitable result of the common doctrine is, to narrow down all religious ideas and all religious effort to the single point of the miraculous renewal it proclaims to be necessary. I say nothing with which you are not all familiar, when I say that there are hundreds of ministers—disciples of this common doctrine, who never say a word about slavery, or rum-drinking, or rum-selling, or any prevailing vice, or social abuse—directing all their labors to enforce upon their people the necessity of making their peace

with God, in this supernatural new-birth. Rufus Choate, intending highly to compliment his minister, Rev. Dr. Adams, of Boston, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his pastorate, attested that the Doctor had never once disturbed his quiet, nor by any word in sermon, hymn, or prayer, carried him back into the world from which he had retreated to the altar! And in this respect, Dr. Adams is a representative man, exemplifying, in this exclusive so-called "religiousness" of his ministry, what is true of multitudes of others, believers with him in the common doctrine of the new-birth. One may listen to their preaching for years, and not hear a word, nor a lisp, to remind him that he is living in a world full of wrongs and abuses which Christ lived and died to overcome, and which it is the purpose of his religion to assail and destroy, and without hearing a text or an appeal to intimate that there is anything for him to do, except, as the phrase is, to "attend to the affairs of his soul," and get saved from hell!

From what does this state of things come? No thoughtful mind can fail to see the easy answer. It is but one of numerous signs, showing how narrow is the view of everything pertaining to the subject of religion, which it is the tendency of the idea of Regeneration, upon which such ministers proceed, to produce. This idea of Regeneration practically divorces religion from character and daily life, so that piety is understood to be one thing, and generosity, and honesty, and manliness another. The Secretary of the American Sabbath School Society—I think that was the title of the asso-

ciation—in Philadelphia, a few years ago, proved a defaulter to a large amount. He had been regarded as a conspicuous example of evangelical piety, so called; and amidst the lamentations over his fall, I remember to have read one article, at least—I think in one of the orthodox journals of this city—vindicating the reality of his piety, and affirming that he was to be regarded as a genuine religious man, notwithstanding the grossness of his fraud! And this but indicates, as you well know, the distinction that has come to be widely recognized between religion and life; so that in his relations to God and the church, one can be regarded as very pious, and as certain of going to heaven, while in all his secular, political, or worldly relations, he is universally known as a very mean, a very hard, or a very tricky man. I once heard it said by a man of long experience in one of our large commercial centres, that among the meanest, hardest, most grasping, and most dishonest men with whom he had ever dealt, were those professedly religious—some of them occupying high positions in the church; and but a short time since, a man of extensive business relations remarked to me that the only persons by whom he had ever been imposed upon, had been so-called pious persons. There is, in this connection, a great deal of significance in a little poem I read, the other day, in which Elder John Leland is represented as inquired of concerning a deacon of his, and as replying that he was "Godward devout, but manward twistical." Who that has had any opportunity for observation in the world, has not known *such* religionists?

Where are we to find the explanation of this state of things, except in this common doctrine of Regeneration, of which I speak? This makes the experience of this miraculous new-birth the one sole condition of acceptance with God, and makes any man or woman who has passed through this experience, and who gives evidence of it by prayer and church-going, a religious man or woman, however faulty in character he or she may be. Character has nothing to do, it is thought, in inciting or assuring this experience, or as a condition of God's favor, or of the heavenly inheritance; naturally, therefore, character becomes of little account, comparatively, as an evidence of religious experience, or as a ground of religious hope. Hence, religion becomes formal and technical instead of vital;—an emotion and a profession instead of a life;—a round of church-going and prayer and ritual observances, instead of a character fragrant with the Christian spirit, and ripening in all righteousness. Easily and naturally it thus comes about, not only that ministers can think they are serving religion if they preach a technical repentance, and an escape from hell, though they are dumb concerning the drunkard, and the slave, and all the public and private wrongs that demand rebuke and condemnation, but that men and women can think themselves religious if they have been "born again," and are attentive to the ritual of religion, though they sell rum, or buy and sell God's children as cattle, or cheat in bargains, or though they may show themselves the mean, or coarse, or sordid, or dishonest people, in all human relations, of whom I have spoken.

All this is avoided, so far as our doctrine of Regeneration becomes an element of life. This gives us to understand that no person can be a religious man or woman, except in proportion as his or her whole life is conformed to the demands of the Christian law. The regenerate man or woman, it tells us, is he or she only who gives evidence of a regenerative experience *in a life amended in all its relations.* Religion, it would have us understand, is honesty, kindness, charity, all moral fidelity towards man, as well as piety towards God;—and, without these, whatever the shock of an emotional experience through which one may have passed, or however fervent in prayer, or punctilious in ritual, or pious towards God, he or she may be, it avails nothing, any of it, we believe, to secure acceptance with God, or to make one a truly renewed and religious man or woman. No believer in our doctrine of Regeneration could find it possible to say, as a zealous orthodox believer once said, "I mean to do my duty to God whether I do it to man or not." *Duty to God* includes *duty to man;* and if one seeks acceptance with God, here or hereafter, or would be accounted a Christian, or give evidence of a renewed heart, he or she can do so only by exhibiting a character vitalized by a spirit of loyalty to all duty, and rounded into moral completeness by the presence of all that makes life pure and beautiful towards man, as well as pious towards God. As you cannot but see, Religion is thus made to have a comprehensiveness of meaning, and a breadth and positiveness of moral purpose, and a vitality of moral principle, which there is nothing in the

common view of Regeneration to give it, and which can be insisted on to most effect only on our theory upon this point.

III. But this doctrine of ours has this practical advantage, also, *because it is fitted to beget and foster a profounder sense of Christian obligation.* "No man liveth unto himself," the doctrine of the apostle was. We act and re-act in a reciprocal influence upon each other. And there is no consideration more fitted to quicken our consciences, and animate us to circumspection, and make us anxious and cautious to live right, than the thought that we are thus living for others as well as for ourselves—living for others, I mean, in the sense that we are helping to shape their characters, and to determine the quality and direction of their lives as well as our own. But none of us are so living in fact, the common theory of Regeneration tells us; and the idea that we are living, or that we can live, in any such sense for others, or that our example or influence can have any effect in promoting their spiritual quickening or regeneration, is a mere phantasm,—a baseless imagination, without the slightest ground of fact to warrant it, if this theory be true. What is the theory? That this matter of Regeneration is a thing that rests with God alone. He quickens, He regenerates whom He will. The motion, the influence, proceeds from Him alone. Dr. Bushnell, a distinguished orthodox clergyman of the liberal class, formerly of Hartford, drew upon himself a great deal of obloquy, a few years since, by teaching that parents

may so live and train their children as to live a regenerate character into them, so that they shall not be able to remember when they began to love God, or to be religious. He wrote a little book advocating this doctrine, and it was printed by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society (orthodox); but it was suppressed on account of the protests against it—condemned and suppressed as of "dangerous tendency!" And why of "dangerous tendency?" Simply because it taught that our children are, in respect to regeneration, to some extent, to be affected by our influence;—simply because, as the objection was formally stated, "it leaves no room for the sovereignty of God in appointing the moral character of men and families!" It was thus pronounced a dangerous heresy to intimate that "the moral character of men," or of our "families," are to be at all affected by what we are or do, and the affirmation was given that this must be held to be wholly within the sovereign control of God!

What matters it, then, what we are, or how we live, so far as our children, or our families, or those around us are concerned? Grant that a certain kind of moral influence flows out from us to affect them, in what is technically called, in the phraseology of the Church, their "moral character," as distinct from their religious life. Such character, the Church teaches, is of no account in God's sight. It is but "worthless rags." Only regenerate character is approved with Him, and failing of this, we are offensive in His view, no matter how excellent we may be morally—just as surely offensive in His view, and just as sure of going to hell,

the best as the worst. Of what real consequence, then, is any influence we may exert of this sort? The grand concern of all is to be regenerated; but with respect to this, we are utterly powerless, and those whom we desire to see quickened and renewed are just as likely to be so whether we live good or ill!

This is the only possible view to be taken of this subject, if the popular idea of Regeneration be accepted, whether it be held on Calvinistic or Arminian grounds. The Arminian theory, as we shall shortly see, puts the whole matter as exclusively into God's sovereign control, and makes Regeneration as solely a thing of this arbitrary sort, as the Calvinistic theory; and really holding either, we must conclude that, in respect to all that is most vital and precious in the moral and spiritual welfare of our children, and our associates, we are utterly without influence, and that, so far as any body else is concerned, it is a matter of utter indifference how we live, whether good or bad. And this being so, need I say how it lessens our sense of obligation to live well?—how it takes away our motives to thoughtfulness and circumspection?—how it makes the question of what we shall be and do, simply a question of our own personal preference, and not at all a question of others' welfare?

How different with *our* doctrine! This presses us with the thought that, since Regeneration is an effect wrought naturally, by moral causes, our lives and influence, whether we will or no, must inevitably tell, either for or against the Regeneration and improving lives of our friends; that every one with whom we associate

will be affected for good or ill in this respect, by the words we speak, by the characters we exhibit, by the acts we perform; and that our children especially, if we have children, will be healthfully or mischievously wrought upon by the spirit we diffuse;—by the example we furnish;—by the atmosphere with which we surround them. The thought of God, and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, is not excluded; but we are pressed with the fact that God works by means, and that the regenerate and holy lives and labors of those quickened by a sense of His love, and sincerely consecrated to His service, are among the most efficient means which He employs to quicken others, and regenerate the world. There is, of course, no time now to dwell on these things. I can only suggest them. But their bare suggestion, I am sure, is sufficient to indicate to you the force of the appeals that are thus made to us to live rightly, prayerfully, religiously, for the sake of others, as well as for our own sake, and thus to indicate the immeasurable superiority, in this respect, of our doctrine of Regeneration as a Practical Power. But

IV. Finally: the grand and most conclusive reason for the superiority we thus claim for our doctrine is, that *it makes us personally responsible for what we are*, as we are not and cannot be if the common doctrine be true. This is the consideration that sweeps the whole board, making out a case against the common doctrine, that leaves no loop-hole for its escape from condemnation, and establishing the Practical Superiority of our doctrine beyond all the power of casuistry to disguise

or conceal it. Look at the common doctrine. As taught by Congregational Calvinism, it is that "we are *made* partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by the Holy Spirit," and that "the Spirit applieth to us this redemption *by working faith in us* and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling"—without which effectual calling, we are totally unable to believe, or to do anything for our salvation. As taught by Presbyterian Calvinism, the doctrine is that we cannot believe, and repent of ourselves;—that we cannot even cease from adding to to our sin;—that even our prayers, before our hearts are renewed, are an abomination in God's sight;—that "nothing but His almighty power and free grace can change and melt our rebellious, hard, and stony hearts;" and that, in the words of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith, as put forth by the General Assembly, those predestinated to life, or to death, "are *particularly and unchangeably designed*," in a number "so *certain and definite* that it cannot be either increased or diminished," and that those "predestinated unto life" were chosen of God "before the foundation of the world," "without *any foresight of faith, or good works, or any other thing*" in them, as conditions or causes moving Him to a choice. As taught by Methodism, or Arminianism, the doctrine is, as defined in the "Articles of Religion," in the authoritative hand-book of "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church:" "The condition of man after the fall is such that he *cannot* turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works, to faith and calling upon God; wherefore,

we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing [going before or aiding] us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."

Methodism boasts itself of its doctrine of Free Will, and lifts up its hands in horror at the Calvinistic doctrine of election and reprobation; but I would be glad to have any Methodist friend tell me how much free-will we have according to this theory, or what we have here, in substance, but the Calvinistic doctrine that our Regeneration is the result solely of God's arbitrary choice, stated in other words. Mark the language: "The condition of man is such that he *cannot turn and prepare* himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith and calling upon God; wherefore *we have no power to do good works*, pleasant and acceptable to God, *without the grace of God* by Christ aiding us, *that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.*" What is this but saying that no soul has power, of itself, to turn to God, or to be good? And what have we here, therefore, really, but the Calvinistic doctrine of election and reprobation, without the frankness of Calvinism in declaring it?

Substantially, then, we find that the accepted doctrine of Regeneration, whether in the Calvinistic or the Arminian form, is—that the whole responsibility of our Regeneration is with God; that, of ourselves, we can do nothing; and that we have no power either to repent or believe, except as God moves us, converts us, regenerates us. The whole affair is in His hands.

I ask you, then,—whose fault is it if we do not repent or believe? But one answer is rationally possible. No man is or can be responsible for not doing what he has no power to do—what, by his very constitution, he is unable to do. I have no wings wherewith to fly; and talk as you will about my duty to fly, or about my sin for not flying, the duty in no way rests upon me, and you cannot make me feel responsible or guilty for not performing it. So with everything else. One to whom God has given no power to paint, or sing, or construct, is not, and cannot be made really to feel, responsible for not being a painter, or a singer, or an inventor. And what is true of these things, is just as true in respect to faith, and repentance, and regenerate character. If God has so made me that I *cannot* believe, or repent, or become a regenerate soul, of myself—only as He moves, inclines, and miraculously changes me, then no responsibility rests upon me touching these things; and if I do not believe, or repent, or become changed, it is—as Catharine Beecher tells us she regarded it in her case—my misfortune, and not my fault. And of all the contradictions and absurdities by which reason has been insulted, and common sense outraged, or life corrupted, none were ever grosser than the pretence that I am or can be responsible in such a case.

My friends, we sometimes mourn over the prevalent indifference and procrastination in regard to Religion. But, whatever occasion there may be for regret, what occasion is there for surprise at these things? How can men and women be expected to be interested in that, concerning which they have been educated to feel

that they have no responsibility, and concerning which they are taught that they have, of themselves, no power? It is the crime of the common doctrine of Regeneration that it thus destroys all sense of responsibility touching the religious life; and no human power can estimate the amount of injury it has thus wrought. The occasion for surprise is that it has not wrought a far wider injury, and that so many have sought and found the religious life, in spite of it. I exhibited here, the other day, the experience of Catharine Beecher under the influence of this common doctrine of Regeneration, in connection with its associate dogma of Total Depravity,—an experience which makes up a record so terrible against these doctrines, that no thoughtful and candid person should be able, a moment longer, to think them any part of the Gospel of Christ. I doubt, indeed, whether there are any other two ideas that have done so much, as these two doctrines of Total Depravity and Miraculous Regeneration, to paralyze religious effort, and destroy religious interest, and vitiate life, and make the whole matter of Religion seem a thing that concerns only those specially and divinely called. And to-day, there is nothing, if we except a true knowledge of God, for which Christendom, and through it the world, is so suffering, as for a correct conception of what the Gospel teaches on these points.

Such a conception, we claim, is furnished in *our* doctrine of Regeneration. *This* makes our Regeneration a thing for which we are personally responsible, just as we are responsible to become honest, if we have been dishonest, to become truthful, if we have been addict-

ed to lying, to become temperate, if we have been gluttons or drunkards. We do not, of course, forget the Divine elements in the case, and that there is a sense in which we can do nothing of ourselves; nor are we unmindful of our Lord's words, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." We fully recognize the truth thus set forth, and devoutly acknowledge our dependence upon God and the aids of the Holy Spirit. But in the sense in which we can do anything, we can change our character, and determine to be good; and, just as I may choose to go here or there, to be cleanly or slovenly, to be reverent or profane, to be a dunce or a scholar, it is for us to say whether we will be regenerate or not. God has richly furnished the means for our instruction and conversion, and is ever ready to aid us by the influence of His Holy Spirit, in our endeavors towards a good life. But under Him, as the Fountain of all life and strength, it is for us to say whether we will use these means, and seek these aids,—and thus to say when and how far we will accept Christ, and love God, and loathe sin, and aspire after holiness, and become good men and women: and according to the measure of our faith and prayer and effort, will be the measure of God's blessing, and of our attainment in a regenerate and consecrated life.

Thus, in this, as in every other affair of life which is at all submitted to our choice, the entire responsibility is with us, and our own will and purpose. And this being so, I am sure you would regard it as an imputation against your intelligence, if I should occupy your time to show that *such* a doctrine, so summoning us to

personal action, and so pressing upon us the fact of our responsibility, is better fitted to move us to faith and repentance, to inspire us to effort, and to quicken us in the religious life, than the doctrine which strips us of all power, choice, or responsibility, and makes our regeneration wholly a matter of God's election or sovereign disposal. I might as well occupy your time to prove that to persuade a man that he can and ought to walk, or sing, or be a diligent student, is more effective to induce him to use his power, than to convince him that he is utterly impotent—absolutely unable to do any such thing.

Here, then, I leave the subject—but not without pressing upon you its lessons and appeals. Has any one who hears me accepted heretofore the common theory of Regeneration? See in the exhibition which has now been given of its legitimate practical results, a demonstration that it cannot be true; and see, not less, in the superior fitness of our Universalist doctrine to produce the best fruits, an equal demonstration that this cannot be false. Above all, my brother or sister, professing to accept this Universalist doctrine of Regeneration, let me press upon you the meaning of what has now been said, and urge you to apply yourself in endeavors towards holiness, as this doctrine of ours demands. Are you doing so? Remember—this doctrine is not something to be simply believed; it deals with facts, and enforces imperative obligations. Are you living in the practical confession of these facts and obligations? Are you loving God? Is Christ precious to you? Do you loathe worldliness and sin,

and pray and struggle for deliverence from them, in the desire to get nearer to God, and in the appropriation of the Saviour's helps? Have you consecrated yourself to the religious life? In a word, claiming to have "the truth as it is in Jesus," have you "put off the old man," and been "renewed in the spirit of your mind, and are you putting on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness?" If not, how can you justify yourself before God, according to this doctrine which you profess to hold? Is it a small thing, think you, for you to insist that you have the truth, and then to live as if your truth were a lie?

My friends, it is not simply painful, it is shocking to me, to see men or women professing to accept this doctrine of Regeneration, and then showing themselves utterly insensible to all that it makes obligatory upon them. It is not surprising, as we have seen, that those accepting the prevalent theory should be careless and negligent concerning religion, waiting for God to convert and regenerate them; but that those who profess to believe that harmony with God is an indispensable condition to their spiritual health and happiness,—who profess to believe that Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Bible, and the Church, are God's provisions to aid us in the fulfilment of this indispensable condition,—who profess to believe that it is for us to avail ourselves of what God has thus bestowed, and to grow into a ripening holiness, and that it is our own fault, involving the loss of the highest good possible to us, if we do not—that *such* should be religiously

unawakened, neglectful of the Bible, and of prayer, and of the Sabbath, and satisfied to live outside the Church, as if there were no God, and no Saviour, and no Christian obligation, and no joy of the regenerate life, seems to me an inconsistency which it is difficult to undersand.

Are *you*, my brother or sister, practicing this inconsistency? If so, why? And how long do you propose to practice it? As a Universalist, you do not doubt that you will, at some time, kneel at Christ's feet, and give yourself to God's service, in the fellowship of those who love Him, and in the desire and purpose to grow into His likeness: *Why not now*, then? When will God, or the Saviour, or your own soul's best interests have more imperative claims upon you? When will the fellowship of those who love the Saviour, be more a privilege, or a help, to you, or when will goodness be more important, or the attractions of a regenerate life more winning? When will you have to surrender less, or when will you gain more than *now*, in clasping the Cross, and resolving to live that life of consecration, and prayer, and increasing purity, which this word REGENERATION signifies to our thought? I ask;—nay, God and the Master ask through me; will you reflect and answer? Have you, in any degree, been trying to attain to a regenerate experince? Look up, and work on. Have you been cold and careless? Think of God's love, and become warmed and reverent. Are you conscious of faults and sins? Renounce your faults; confess your sins; and take Christ for your helper, that he

may inspire you by his example, and baptize you with his cleansing blood. Have you been content to talk about the Gospel, indifferent to the duties it enjoins, and the culture it requires? Let it become a vital and sanctifying power in your souls. Have you neglected prayer? Begin to pray. Have you withheld yourself from the Church? See that it is your spiritual home, and, in the confession of Christ and your indebtedness to him, put yourself into your true relations there. Have you been living only for this world and its perishable things? Be conscious of your inheritance as a child of God; let the radiance of the Immortal Life shine into your uplifted eyes, and resolve, henceforth, in communion with God and Heaven, to live that Regenerate Life which is alone worthy of one who is to live forever.

VII.

Retribution.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."—Gal. vi. 7.

Every perfect system of moving powers includes its appropriate checks and balances. Life is such a system of moving powers; and what we call Rewards and Punishments are but the checks and balances God has established in it. They indicate the moral necessities of our being;—the conditions to which we *must* adjust ourselves, if we would really live or enjoy. And as those whose weal or woe is thus involved, there are few subjects which we are more concerned to understand, than the principles upon which these checks and balances operate, and the nature of the conditions they impose. To deal with the subject, in some of its aspects, is the purpose of this discourse.

First of all, however, let it be distinctly understood what, as we believe, is the place which any considerations of reward or punishment hold—and in any elevated view alone can hold—among the motives of life. Judging from the manner in which they are accustomed to urge such considerations, and especially to appeal to what they term "the rĕtributions of eternity," one is obliged to conclude that our so-called evangelical friends count these things as among the highest motives

at their command. One writer of eminent authority, indeed, has gone so far as to say that, without the doctrine of future endless retribution, "the moral government of God is deprived of *all its power to influence the heart and life*, because deprived of *all the motives* by which it secures obedience and deters from crime;"* and it is certain that through the use which has been made of such motives, the popular mind has, to a wide extent, been educated to regard reward and punishment as the most legitimate and only really effective means of influencing action. Hence the fact that there are so many who think that, were it not for hell and heaven, as they are usually described, there would be no reason why a bad life should be renounced, or a good life chosen; and hence, also, the fact that there are so many, and especially so many parents and teachers, who seem to have no conception of any other method of securing obedience than to promise or threaten something, and whose invariable appeal is, If you will be good, and do as I wish, you shall have candy, or a book, or some favor;—if you will not, you shall be whipped, or shut up, or suffer some penalty.

To us, all this seems wrong. Not that we deny, or question, the legitimacy, or propriety, of rewards and punishments *in their place*, among the means of securing moral ends. To do this would be to challenge God's administration, under which He has sought to determine our choice by assuring us of good in virtue, and of evil in sin. But such means, we believe, are designed only for those who, for the time, are incapa-

* Dr. Hawes' "Reasons against Universal Salvation."

ble of being affected by higher considerations. "The fear of the Lord is" only "the *beginning* of wisdom," we are told; and that which appeals to our fears, or to any corresponding element of our nature, is the very lowest and meanest of all the appeals that can be made to us. That, you will all agree, is a very poor kind of honesty, which refrains from stealing, simply because the jail, or the state's prison, is threatened; and not less poor, it will be granted, is that kind of obedience induced by the dollar, or the sugar-plum, which is to be thus gained. Equally poor, we say, is that kind of virtue, or of piety, which is secured simply by the fact that God will punish sin, or reward His service. You would feel very badly—any one of you who has a child—to discover that your child is dutiful, and apparently affectionate, not because he has any love of duty, or of you, but simply because he fears that you will whip, or disinherit him, or because you are, by-and-by, to give him a new suit of clothes, or a farm. It is better, indeed, you would say, that the child should be dutiful even from such a motive, than that he should be disobedient and vicious; but such service, you would also say, is in the lowest degree mercenary and mean, and is not the kind of service I want from my child. And equally mean and mercenary, in God's sight, we believe, is any service of Him induced simply in view of punishment to be avoided, or of reward to be attained.

Sin should be avoided, we allege, because it *is* sin—a dishonor of ourselves, and disloyalty and ingratitude to God. A child should love and honor his parents without any regard to evil threatened, or good prom-

ised, because they *are* his parents; because every consideration of filial piety, of honor and obligation, conspires to bind his heart to theirs, and to make it his delight to do them service. And so, as between us and God, action should be right, without any thought of what is to come of doing or neglecting it,—because right *is* right, and because everything like principle demands that we consecrate ourselves to its service. We should gravitate towards God, as planets towards the sun, because He *is* God, and because we feel that we belong to Him. And so of Christ, as he stands pleading with us to come to him. We should go to him, seeking to receive the baptism, and to know the power, of his truth—in no purchased service, but because he *is* Christ, sent of God to redeem us; because of what his Cross is as the symbol of his love and the instrument of our salvation; and because only as we know his truth and its power can we truly live as souls. We are vassals or hirelings, just so far as we serve God, or Christ, on any lower plane of motive—simply for the evil to be avoided, or the pay to be got.

But this plane of motive is too elevated except for those who have been spiritually educated and ripened up to it; and hence the necessity of motives that shall appeal to lower principles in our nature, and, amidst the temptations of the world and the seductions of sense, restrain through the fear of punishment, and animate by the hope of reward. It is but one of the numberless illustrations of the condescension of God in adapting himself to the condition and needs of His children, that we see Him recognising the necessity of

this in His moral government, and so clearly and positively declaring the certainty of reward and the inexorable law of retribution.

And this brings us to the contrast between *our* doctrine and the prevalent doctrine upon this subject. I just spoke of the *inexorable* law of retribution. Our friends of the so-called evangelical school do not believe in any such law of retribution. They insist, as one of the cardinal ideas of their system, that this is not, in any complete or positive sense, a state of *retribution*, only of *probation*. We are here, they allege, to "form characters for eternity;"—candidates for heaven or hell. And while we are here, if we may believe them, God, if such a figure may be allowed, does business with us wholly, or mainly, on the credit system. The good are not rewarded, nor the sinful punished, according to their deserts. Certain natural and physical consequences do indeed follow our actions, so far as we observe, or transgress, the laws of nature, or of our physical constitution. But no absolute moral government is exercised over us. There is no intrinsic connection between virtue and reward, or between vice and punishment. "Sin itself is no misery to a sinner," affirms Dr. Adams, of Boston, one of the high-priests of the popular faith. We go on as we list, the idea is—the wicked happy in their wickedness,—the good often distressed and wretched,—all positive reckoning with us postponed until "the great day of final account." *Then* the books will be opened, and our fate be sealed forever. *Then* the good will be adjudged to heaven, where they shall be compensated for all they have sac-

rificed and suffered in being good here; and the unbelieving and the wicked will be doomed to endless woe—unless, as is most likely, they shall have wiped out the record of a life of sin by a timely repentance just at death—and if so doomed, they will pay in the agony they endure for all they have here enjoyed in unbelief and sin.

You are all so familiar with this as the prevalent doctrine on this subject, that authorities scarcely need be cited to confirm the statement. But that I may give our friends the advantage of their own statements, let me read you what Albert Barnes says on this point.* "It is," he says, "a matter of clear revelation—indeed it is the entire basis and structure of the scheme, that *the affairs of justice and of law are* [here] *under suspense; . . .* that *crime is for the present dissociated from woe*, for a specific purpose, viz., that mortals may repent and be forgiven; and that there will come a day when the native indissoluble connection between sin and suffering shall be restored,† and that then they shall travel on hand in hand forever." Another writer, the celebrated Dr. Hawes, of Hartford, from whom I have already quoted, cites Scripture to prove that the wicked fare just as well in this world—on the whole, fare rather better, than the righteous, and

* Introduction to Butler's Analogy, p. xviii.

† *When* was this "native indissoluble connection between sin and suffering" dissolved? By whom was it dissolved?—by the direct action of God, to encourage men to sin, that they might "repent and be forgiven?" Above all, if it were an "indissoluble connection," how could it be dissolved so as to need to be "restored?" This is a remarkable Hibernicism, in a writer like Mr. Barnes.

then adds, "To say that wicked men are punished in the present life is *false in fact*. . . . Admit, if you please, that the grosser sensualities and crimes are usually followed by something like a speedy retribution; what punishment, let me ask, do they endure who forget and contemn God? who are unjust, cruel, avaricious, proud, oppressive, tyrannical?" So sound and self-evident does he count this theory, that he declares, further on, that "*if any thing can prove moral insanity*, it is a belief that God now dispenses rewards and punishments to men according to their respective characters!" Nor, I am sure, can those of you who heard the discourses *professedly* against Universalism, recently reviewed here, have forgotten how strenuously it was insisted that sinners are not properly punished in this world, and that Universalism is an unmerciful and barbarous doctrine, because it so affirms that there is no escape for the violators of God's law.

This, then, is the so-called evangelical theory of Retribution—everywhere urged and insisted upon as vitally important, and as the only theory that can enable us to understand the ways of God, or the meaning of life. It is a theory, indeed, it should in justice be said, in respect to which, as in respect to every other so-called evangelical doctrine in its old-fashioned and genuine form, there are, every year, more and more dissent and protest, even among those who profess to be sound in the popular faith. It is a theory, too, that is to no small extent ignored by those who profess to hold it; ignored through the force of moral instincts touching retribution, which no opposing theories can

wholly stifle, or overcome. These instincts are, happily, so organic and ineradicable in our moral constitution, that, whatever theories may be, they more or less compel to action upon the principle that wrong will here and now be punished, and virtue rewarded. Thus, for example, the same Albert Barnes, who says, when stating his theory, that "it is a matter of clear revelation that the affairs of justice and of law are under suspense—that crime is for the present dissociated from woe," in another place and aiming at another purpose, says that "the fact is sufficiently universal to be a proper ground of action, that virtue meets with its appropriate reward and [that] vice is appropriately punished."

But these modifications and instinctive confessions do not affect the fact that the theory, as just stated, is the affirmed and established theory, notwithstanding—the theory which our friends profess to find taught in the Bible and confirmed in actual life. It is the theory, moreover, that consistency would require them to assert, even if they did not find it thus enforced. The doctrine of Total Depravity logically necessitates the doctrine of happiness in sin. A bestial nature is at home only in bestial surroundings and employments; and so, by an equal necessity, a nature corrupt, "opposed to all good and inclined to all evil," can be at home only in evil—and if at home, must be happy in it; can be happy only in it.

Our whole theory is entirely the opposite of all this. Reason, the Bible, observation, and experience, all unite to assure us that this is a state—that every day and every hour is a day and an hour of *retribution*, sure,

inevitable, inexorable; that, however time may sometimes be necessary for certain consequences of a vicious course to culminate, and burst most fully and most terribly upon the offender, there is no system of debt and credit under the government of God; that law and justice are never for a moment in suspense; that crime and woe never are, and never can be, dissociated; that however the more outward consequences of wrong may, in some instances, be delayed, God holds us to an instant and constant account; that every day is a day of judgment; that what we *are* always determines what we *enjoy*; that the life of the soul is subject to intrinsic conditions as absolute as the life of the body; and that, as the violation of a law of our physical system necessitates the penalty, so the violation of a moral law necessitates its penalty—each soul, in itself, and for itself, keeping its own account, and acting, under God, as the executor of its own retributions. We say to those tempted to sin, as Moses said of old to his people, "Be sure your sin will find you out;" or, as God said to our first parents in the garden, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Our word is, in reiteration of the testimony scattered all through the Bible, "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons." All the elements of our nature, and all the resources of the Divine government, we believe, are pledged on the side of virtue, for its certain daily reward—and against sin, for its certain

daily punishment. There is no possibility of failure or escape. So sure as good is done, so sure good will be experienced—not, it may be, in houses, or lands, or worldly reward, but in what is better—in spiritual life and health; in

"The soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy."

So sure as wrong is committed, so sure evil will be the result—the result, though every outward circumstance be prosperous, in the soul's darkness, destitution, wretchedness, insensibility, or loss in some way Sin *is* death and hell. Goodness *is* heaven.

What Ralph Waldo Emerson has stated as moral philosophy, we believe as a truth of religion; viz: that virtue and reward, on their part—that crime and punishment, on their part, "grow out of one stem. Punishment is a fruit that unsuspected ripens within the flower of the pleasure, (or of the offence.) which concealed it. Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, can not be severed. The parted water reunites behind our hand. We can no more halve things, and get a *one end* without an *other end*, than we can get an inside that shall have no outside, or a light without a shadow. Life invests itself with inevitable conditions, which the unwise seek to dodge; which one and another brags that he does not know—that they do not touch him; but the brag is on his lips, the conditions are in his soul. If he escapes them in one part, they attack him in another more vital part." And we may add, what was just now said, that so sure as God lives, and so long as the soul is a soul, subject to God's reign, escape

is impossible. *The conditions broken, the penalty must follow.*

And now, with these two theories of Retribution before you, I am sure that I shall be but uttering what is in all your minds, when I say that this doctrine of *ours* may properly claim the Practical Superiority on every account, and in every view that can be taken of the subject.

I. It may claim this superiority, *because of the spirit in which, and the purpose for which, it shows retribution to be administered.* This is, almost necessarily, the first point that attracts attention in the contrast between *our* doctrine of punishment and the prevalent doctrine. *Our* doctrine knows nothing of mere vengeance in retribution; and the importance of this fact, practically, can scarcely be too strongly stated. Like begets like. Vengeance only excites enmity or spite; and punishment, if too severe, only exasperates and hardens, instead of restraining or doing good. This has come to be the principle on which all modern criminal jurisprudence proceeds. Laws, it is now universally admitted among civilized nations, to be most potent, must be just and humane. Laws barbarous in their penalties barbarize those subject to them, and ere-long fail to control them. For a similar reason, punishments unduly severe defeat themselves. It was once the testimony of Rev. Jared Curtis, for many years chaplain of the Massachusetts State Prison, and himself an embodiment of Calvinistic doctrines, "that it is neither the *duration*, nor the *severity* of punishment, to which we are to look for those results which

are designed by our improved system of Prison discipline, but rather to its *nature*, and the *manner of its infliction*." In other words, his experience had taught him that punishment, to be most effectual, should be *just* in its nature, and *benevolent* in its design. He little thought, probably, of the testimony he was giving against the healthful influence of his doctrine of Divine Retribution, or of the argument which the principles he thus declared furnish for the superiority of Universalism as a Practical Power; and yet, his testimony is the universal testimony, so far as concerns the mere human administration of Retribution. On this point, I may say, there is but one opinion among the most intelligent and Christian minds. Not only is it generally admitted and asserted, that punishment is legitimate only as it seeks the good of the punished, so far as it can without endangering the public interests, but it is also admitted and asserted, that only that punishment which is threatened or inflicted in this spirit is likely to be most effective.

Here is the "Annual Report of the School Committee of the city of Lynn," for the year ending 1860, written by an esteemed friend of mine, the Rev. Mr. Owen, the faithful pastor of the Second Baptist Church of that city. Speaking of the subject of discipline, he says, "If a teacher is angry, . . . or punishes with the spirit of vengeance, or with any intent other than the good of the child, and keeping the school under wholesome restraint, then the feeling of the Committee is one against the act." Why? He does not say; but if he had explained, he would have

said, not only because the child has a right to such just and reformatory treatment, but because only thus can a school be really governed, and its discipline maintained. To the same effect, I have here still higher authority—"The Elements of Moral Science," by Rev. Dr. Wayland, late President of Brown University, and one of the leading thinkers and theologians of the country. In his chapter on "Benevolence toward the Injurious," discussing the duty of society to the criminal, he says: "They are bound to seek his happiness by *reclaiming** him; that is, *to direct all treatment* of him, while under their care, *with distinct reference to his moral improvement.* This is the law of benevolence, and it is obligatory, no less on societies than on individuals. *Every one must see that the tendency of a system of prison discipline of this kind must be to diminish crime, while that of any other system must be, and always has been, to increase it.* Nor is this chimerical. The whole history of prisons has tended to establish precisely this result. *Prisons which have been conducted on the principle of retaliation, have everywhere multiplied felons;* while those which have been conducted *on the principle of rendering a prison a school of moral reformation*, have, thus far, *succeeded beyond even the anticipations of their friends. Such a prison is also the greatest terror to a wicked man;* and it ceases not to be so, until he becomes, at least, comparatively virtuous. The whole experience of John Howard is summed up by himself in a single sentence: '*It is in vain to punish the*

* This word is Italicized by Dr. Wayland.

wicked, unless you seek to reclaim them.'" [p. 389.] This is remarkable testimony. There can be no misunderstanding its bearing on the point before us. It is unquestionable evangelical testimony, so-called; and yet, you perceive, it enforces, in the most emphatic terms possible, the principle that only as punishment is administered in a just and benevolent spirit, and for the good of the punished, is it likely to be of any use: the very principle upon which I am now claiming the Practical Superiority of our doctrine of Retribution; and I ask you if it is not surprising, that what is thus so clearly seen by our friends to be true everywhere else, is not seen by them to be as true also in theology, and in reference to the government of God.

It has ever been one of the chief sources of the weakness of the doctrine of endless misery, that it denounces a punishment so evidently unjust, because so out of proportion to human desert, and so empty of any purpose of good. Men have an instinctive sense of the desert of wrong-doing, and a reasonable punishment, threatened for a good purpose, will not usually be without its effect upon them; but when you talk to them about such a punishment as endless torment, inflicted for the sins of this brief life, and perhaps for the sin of Adam, of which they were never guilty,—inflicted simply for its own sake, without any design of good, you fail, to any extent, to reach them. Though they may profess to believe it, the thing is too monstrous—and such undue severity defeats itself. Theologians may theorize about the infinite nature of sin, and about its desert, therefore, of an infinite punishment; but there is nothing in

any unperverted conscience to respond to such theorizings. *A finite being cannot feel himself guilty of an infinite offence.* Hence, except as there are those artificially drilled and morbid on this point, the idea of endless punishment must always shock the sense of justice, and seem an outrage against all the proprieties and balance of things. Many persons seriously think that there is no safety for the moral interests of the world, except as they are fortified and preserved by the terrible penalty threatened by this doctrine of endless misery. But this very severity is one element of its weakness. The thing is overdone. Some may be affected, as we know they are; but the great mass will not and cannot be.

Did it never occur to you, as a remarkable fact, that, of the great numbers who profess to believe the doctrine of endless misery, so few seem to be at all touched by it, or to have the slightest interest in complying with what it declares, and what they themselves verbally affirm, to be the conditions of salvation? At first view, it seems remarkable; but, looking deeper, it is only what we should expect. Faith is over-strained. The bow is bent to too great a tension, and its elasticity and reaction are destroyed. Threatened and familiarized with a doom so horrible and so purposeless, the mind either fails to realize and respond to it as an actual thing, and sinks into unconcern, or a dead indifference, or it is hardened, turned away from God, and filled with hatred or dislike towards Him. If one, of the culture and opportunities of Catharine Beecher, could be moved by the common theory of God and His

government to say, "Such a God is not worthy to be loved; I wouldn't love Him if I could, and I am glad I cannot," what must be the effect of these horrible representations of Him, and of His unjust and vindictive penalties, on less cultivated and thoughtful minds, but to deaden all regard for Him, or to beget a spirit of hardihood, or bravado, which says—Do your worst, if you will; I don't care. Have you not seen those who had evidently said this? As I just remarked, the undue severity of the penalty threatened thus defeats itself. On this account, the doctrine proves not only, in many cases, utterly impotent for good, but, in many other cases, absolutely a tremendous power for evil; and this for the same substantive reason that, as Dr. Wayland testifies, "*prisons conducted on the principle of retaliation have everywhere multiplied felons.*"

With *our* doctrine it is not so. As I intimated in the outset, it is the distinction and the glory of Universalism, that, while it affirms retribution to be inevitable and inexorable, it shows it to be always just; always filled with a merciful meaning; always administered in a loving spirit. Severe and terrible as it is sometimes, it is never inflicted except as the instrument of a Father's goodness, and as a means of preparing souls for that hatred of sin, in which they shall turn to Him to delight evermore in His love and service. And, the authorities I have cited being at all considered, I need not say how different must be the effect of any thought or experience of punishment, as thus interpreted, from its effect when regarded simply as the outpouring of

God's vindictive wrath forever. The soul willingly confesses the justice of the punishment, and is touched by the sense of God as the Father which is thus imparted; and, with all that is best in its affections appealed to, and bitterly experiencing the curse of sin, the transition is easy and natural to that confidence in God, and that regard for Him, which shall henceforth make life a consecration to Him; an offering inspired and pervaded by something higher than any thought of punishment or reward—inspired and pervaded by the loyalty of a child's loving heart, and the desire and purpose to dwell in nearness to Him.

II. This Universalist doctrine of Retribution has the advantage practically, *because it brings punishment nearer*. Any exposure affects us in proportion as it is imminent. We all know that we must die; but there is not one of you who is affected by this general statement, as you would be if you should be told and believe that you are to die five minutes hence. So, if we should be told that the foundations of this house are at this moment giving way, and that, if we remain here, we shall be crushed beneath the falling walls, we should be moved as we could not be by being told that the house will fall at some time—perhaps a long time hence. These examples show us the general principle. Distance always weakens the force of impression; and any event, any exposure, interests us as we think it remote, or at hand. It is in view of this familiar principle that our present position is taken. Retribution affects us in proportion as it is *near*. Teach your

children to feel that disobedience will subject them, *by-and-by*, to painful consequences, if they do not repent, and have you done as much to deter them from disobedience, as when you convince them that it will be immediately followed with such painful consequences? Or, convince a man tempted to transgress, that, the moment he does so, retribution will begin, and have you not done more to restrain him, so far as the consideration of punishment can do so, than though you tell him that he will be punished some time hence—you know not when—unless, as he may, he shall entirely escape through repentance?

The conclusion to which we are led, then, these things being true, in respect to the practical force of *our* doctrine of retribution, is apparent. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion," said the prophet of old, "ye that put far away the evil day;" and this is what the Church does, as it denies retribution here, and transfers it to another world. It falsely places men "at ease." It "puts far away the evil day," by telling them that, so far as they are here concerned, they may sin with impunity. The only reason why it is not safe to sin, it insists, is because of those tremendous fires yonder, into which those will be cast who do not seasonably repent. *Our* doctrine, on the contrary, brings punishment close at hand. It proclaims God's olden message into the ear of every soul tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit of sin, "*In the day thou eatest thereof*, thou shalt surely die." It makes no abatement. It admits no postponement. Consequences there are, indeed, which may be delayed; but a

present and immediate punishment there must be. "The way of the transgressor *is* hard :"—not shall be. "Judgment lingereth not, and damnation slumbereth not." Close upon the heels of sin, and inseparable from it, treads its penalty. Our doctrine uncovers no hell in the future world, bidding men look *there* and tremble ; but it discloses the present and constant hell of wrong — with its worm that dies not ; with its flames that are not quenched ; with every added sin transformed immediately into a new element of damnation,—a new coal added to the flames ;—and in view of *these*, it says to men, *Tremble*, and *beware!* And doing this, does it not,—must it not, exert a restraining and practical power, such as the prevalent doctrine, with its retributions so postponed, never can ?

III. Our doctrine of Retribution has this advantage, also, *because it makes the measure of sinfulness the measure of punishment.* It was just remarked that our doctrine shows every added sin as a new element of woe. As you well know, this cannot be said of the common view. Referring all retribution to eternity, it sends all who have repented to the same heaven, and all who have not repented to the same hell. So far as this doctrine is concerned, therefore, it makes no difference whether one is more or less a sinner. In danger of hell, on first entering life, and on account of the first sin, one is no more in danger, and has no more to dread, whatever the amount of his transgression, or the time over which it may be extended.

To show that I do not misstate, or do our friends

injustice, let me read what these catechisms, with which you have become familiar,* say on this point. The Westminster, or Congregational, and the Methodist catechisms use the same language. They say: "*Q.* Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous? *A.* Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others. *Q.* What doth every sin deserve? *A.* Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come." The Presbyterian Catechism is different. This is the form in which it puts the doctrine: "*Q.* Doth original sin wholly defile you, and is it sufficient to send you to hell though you had no other sin? *A.* Yes. . . . *Q.* What are the wages of sin? *A.* Death and hell. . . . *Q.* What doth the least breach of these (God's) commandments deserve? *A.* God's eternal wrath and curse."

Now, admitting the theoretical distinction made by the first two catechisms, as to the heinousness of sin, practically it amounts to nothing, you perceive, since every sin is infinite, and alike deserves God's endless wrath and curse. In this, all three of the catechisms are agreed. So far as respects the consideration of punishment, then, there is no distinction in the demerit of sins, and no amount of sin can increase the amount of penalty to which we are exposed. Born in a condition

* I have chosen, for the most part, throughout these discourses, to cite from these catechisms rather than from more scholastic works, because, while equally authoritative, they exhibit the doctrines of the creeds as actually "served up" for the indoctrination of the people.

of sin that is "sufficient to send us to hell though we had no other," and even if this were not so, deserving hell for our first sin, one, as I have said, is in no more danger, and has no more punishment to dread, however much, or however long he may sin. Whatever the amount, one can but go to hell, after all.

Do I speak to an intelligent man or woman who needs to be told, that the inevitable tendency of such teaching is, to make one reckless as to character and conduct, and, after having once sinned, indifferent as to how much more he may sin? There is a vulgar adage, familiar to us all, to the effect that "one may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb," which puts into speech the principle upon which men are likely to act in such a case. Make robbery and murder alike capital offences, and those who rob will usually murder, for the reason that they can but be hung at the worst, and that "dead men tell no tales." So, taught that they deserve hell for the least sin, people are inevitably encouraged to do any amount of wrong to which they are tempted, since nothing more is to be feared for much than for little, and much as well as little can be wiped out by repentance at last.

Our doctrine puts the subject into a wholly different form, with a wholly different result. Guilt, this tells us, is increased in proportion to sin—and in the same proportion, character is debased, and the consequences of sin are experienced. He that sins much must suffer much—and he that sins little, in proportion. Every step downward, therefore, is a step into a deeper hell. Every offence is a new occasion and a new instrument

of retribution, and every soul is admonished, if it would not become more entirely dead, and ruined, and wretched, to guard against becoming more sinful, by being betrayed into new transgressions. But I pass to say,

IV. Still further, and finally: Our doctrine has the advantage as a Practical Power, *because it renders punishment more certain.* This, after all, is the grand consideration, and is *the* point in connection with which not simply the worthlessness, but the immorality of the common doctrine is most apparent, and the advantage and healthier tendency of ours undeniable. As throughout these discourses, so now, I wish to avoid everything like severity of language. But in justice to my own most serious convictions, I must aver it as my solemn belief, that, in all the world, there is no more mischievous, or morally destructive error, than the teachings of the received and so-called evangelical theology in reference to this subject. Those who believe this theology are fond of talking of the immoral tendency of Universalism. If there were anything in Universalism a hundredth part as immoral as this, I would never preach or lisp it again. So, we sometimes hear about "the devil's doctrine;" but if there were twenty thousand devils, each as subtile and cunning as Satan is now reputed to be, and they should take counsel together to contrive a plan to deceive and seduce souls, they could invent nothing better suited to their purpose, than the doctrine that is taught, with so much pretension, as specially evangelical and restraining in respect to this matter of punishment.

Look at it. If there be any restraining efficacy in the thought of punishment, it is obvious that it must be in proportion to the *certainty* of the punishment threatened. You might as well shoot bubbles against a rock, as to talk to an offender, or to one tempted to be an offender, of punishment of which there is no certainty, or which he can easily escape. Formerly, the efficacy of punishment was thought to lie in its *severity*. Laws were framed accordingly. Latterly, a wiser estimate of the principles involved has prevailed ; and in everything, except religion, it has become a settled axiom among the well-informed, that, as was intimated in the extract just now given from Rev. Mr. Curtis, the restraining power of punishment lies, not in its *duration*, or *severity*, but in its *certainty*. Fix ever so severe a penalty to a law, or to a given course of action, and then satisfy those whom you would affect that the law will be inoperative, or show them a way in which the penalty may be evaded, and what have you done to impress or deter them? Nothing. You are precisely where you were before you had announced your penalty, and the effect will be the same as if there were no talk of penalty in the case. You will have given complete immunity to the offence. Some parents are in the bad habit of threatening their children with punishment—sometimes with unmentionable severities—if they disobey ; but the children have come to understand that all such threats are mere words, and they proceed as if no word had been spoken. And so inefficiency of restraint must always result from uncertainty of punishment—in precise proportion to the uncertainty.

On this account, Gen. Banks, when Governor of Massachusetts, in an admirable address to his Council, took ground against the frequency of pardons, as tending to encourage the hope of escape from the consequences of crime, and thus inevitably to weaken the force of law. Upon the same principle, the wise father or mother, if he or she finds it necessary to threaten a child, thinks more of always meaning what he or she may say, and of doing it, than of the amount of punishment threatened. Such a father or mother, as he or she values a parent's moral influence in the family, never threatens a punishment that is not inflicted as certainly as it is incurred. Taking up the principle thus involved, in its application to all human governments, Montesquieu, in his great work on the Spirit of the Laws, declares that "if we inquire into the cause of all human corruptions, we shall find that they proceed from *the impunity of crimes*, and *not* from the moderation of punishments."

It is in view of these undeniable facts that, if there were nothing else, our doctrine of Retribution has the right to claim the practical advantage over all others. It renders punishment inevitable, inexorable. As was said in stating it, it admits of no possibility of escape. Just so sure as the water rises on the beach, when the tide comes in,—just so sure as any effect follows its cause, so sure, it tells us, will transgression be followed by retribution. "Though hand join in hand," it certifies us, "the wicked *shall not* go unpunished." "Woe unto the wicked! it *shall* be ill with him, for the reward of his hands *shall* be given him." "Whatsoever a man soweth that *shall* he reap." No condition, no contin-

gency is recognized in the case. As well expect the sun to go down, and no night to follow,—as well expect to cast one's self into the flames, and not to be burned, as expect to sin and not suffer the consequences.

How different it is with the prevalent theory, our statement of it indicated, and you well know. It practically absolves us from all present accountability, and gives complete impunity to wrong. Its proclamation is, Hear, O ye tempted ones, "the affairs of justice and of law are under suspense;"—"crime is for the present dissociated from woe;"—"it is insanity to pretend that there is, in this world, any such thing as a just reward of virtue, or a just punishment of sin;"—the only punishment you have reason to apprehend is that of endless torment in the future world, and *that*, however long you may live in sin, you can easily escape if you will but betimes repent! Is it not so? I do not pretend, of course, that the doctrine is usually put into just this form; but do I at all misrepresent its substance, when I so state it? Where, then, is the *certainty* of punishment? Or, where the restraining force of the theory of retribution which so threatens, and then makes the threatening of no account? Or, what lie could be invented more fatally fitted—not simply to weaken the restraints of virtue, but to encourage those who believe it to a life of sin?

"O that I had before known these things," wailed a young man, some years ago, in one of the prisons of this city, where he was incarcerated for some high crime, as the doctrines of Universalism, and especially its doctrine of retribution, was laid open to him, "O

that I had before known these things! Then had I not been here!" He had been educated in the popular doctrines, and in the belief that sin is not punished in this world; and his career and end were the natural consequences. And many are the poor souls who might wish the same wish, and give a similar explanation of their moral ruin. A terrible record has the prevalent doctrine of retribution in this respect. It is the very doctrine of the devil, preached of old in the Garden of Eden,—"Ye *shall not surely* die;" and as it proved the occasion of the fall of the tempted then, so has it ever since been the great lie which has filled the world with moral wrecks, and, to so wide an extent, made the appeals of Christianity of none effect. It is red with the blood of deceived and ruined souls. We sometimes talk of the mischievous nature of Romish Indulgences, and with good reason. But this doctrine is a system of worse than Romish indulgence. "Go on, and sin as you will," it virtually says to men, though not in so many terms—"Go on, and then repent and escape all the consequences of your course, and get to heaven as securely as the best."

Look at the case of General Nelson, who was killed by General Davis, last autumn. He had been, from his youth, an undoubting believer in the doctrine of endless misery. But to what effect? To this very effect:—to be taught to scoff at the idea of any present connection between sin and retribution;—to think only of a future hell as the thing to be dreaded;—and so to live the coarse, profane, and brutal life he did,—according to all accounts that have never been denied, set-

ting at naught God and all sacred things, but, all the while, intending to repent in season to get safely into heaven. Hence, the scene we saw. Shot down in the midst of his passion and brutality, straightway the minister was hurriedly sent for, and, in fifteen minutes, this profane and godless man, whose whole career had been a defiance of every divine law, had repented, been baptized, received the communion, and gone, through the door of Episcopal absolution, straight into heaven—escaping, if we may credit the Church, all punishment for his utterly atheistic and sinful life! What is the doctrine, the theoretical and practical consequences of which are thus illustrated, but a stupendous system of moral license,—first blinding its believers to the intrinsic nature of sin, and then encouraging them to think that, if they manage right, they can commit it with impunity? I only wonder that the moral instinct of retribution has asserted itself over such a doctrine so widely as it has, and that the results of its prevalence have not been far more disastrous to the spiritual interests of Christendom. Great reason have we for thankfulness that a juster estimate of moral law is displacing so dangerous an error; and nothing does the best interests of the world more imperatively demand, than that every lover of virtue shall confess the truth and Practical Superiority of our doctrine of Retribution, and unite to proclaim it in the old apostolic and Universalist words, "Be not deceived;—God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect

of persons." Not until this doctrine is understood and felt as Universalism preaches it, will the idea of punishment, as God's provision to restrain us from sin, do its fitting work.

Other considerations suggest themselves; but I will not further pursue the subject. In view of the argument as thus submitted, I cannot believe that any candid person present—even if his or her sympathy and conviction have heretofore been the other way—can fail to see that, for all purposes of practical efficiency, the advantage is, in every way, on the side of the Universalist doctrine of Retribution. Indeed, my friends, I confess that when I consider what this doctrine of ours is, and what and how apparent are the various principles it involves and declares, I cannot but be amazed that any intelligent and reflecting mind can question either its truth, or its superior power, or think of the doctrine of endless misery as, for a moment, to be compared with it as a healthy element of life. This doctrine of endless misery, like all the evils which God has permitted, has, doubtless, had its work to do, and has, in some way, been overruled for good; but it is a fossil of the barbarous Past, and it is a wonder that any can be found, in these days, to think of it as now having the slightest worth as a moral force in the world. There are those, as I have before intimated, who think that the whole moral welfare of the race is dependent upon it, and that, without it, all the safeguards of virtue would be gone. I would have such,—I would have any one who is disposed to talk of its restraining and practical power, tell me why it has not

so proved itself. Do such persons,—do you, my friends, ever think that the periods and the localities when and where this doctrine has held most undisputed sway, have been the darkest and most licentious periods and localities in history? Some of us have recently heard it claimed from the pulpit, that all heathendom has been filled with this doctrine, and have heard this alleged fact put forth as an evidence of its truth. Certain it is that in some of the worst parts of heathendom it has prevailed:—are we to see in the abounding and hideous moral corruptions of heathenism, evidence of its healthful power? And looking through Christian history, when has Christendom been darkest and most corrupt, except when this doctrine most widely prevailed? Who have been those who have reddened the records of the past eighteen hundred years with the blood of their enormities, and blotted it with their oppressions and villainies? Who have filled the prisons and swung from the gibbets of these centuries? Who have made up the company of the profane and the irreligious, the Sabbath-breaking and the immoral? Who have cloaked hypocrisy and baseness under the pretence of religion? or, who, among Church-members and ministers, have most frequently fallen from their integrity, and dishonored the Christian name, in covering themselves with shame? Who but believers of this much-vaunted safeguard of purity—the doctrine of endless misery?

To the same effect, I might ask you to visit the prisons and penitentiaries of this country and of Christendom, to go among the hypocritical, the dissolute and

the vile any where to-day, and to tell me whom you would find. But I will only ask you to go, in imagination, through this city; sweep together the dregs of Five Points and all the vicious and abandoned that grovel and herd among us and around us, and then inform me, how many, among them all, could you find who, so far as they have any religious ideas, would not tell you that they believe in a general judgment-day and in the Church doctrine of endless misery? Not one in a thousand,—probably, not one in ten thousand.

And so, I might pursue these questions; but these sufficiently illustrate the boasted power of this doctrine for good, and indicate the fitting reply to those who talk as if we were undermining all the foundations of virtue and religion in laboring against it.

I say these things in no want of respect or kindness towards persons, but simply in justice to the subject. This doctrine of endless torment is not only a libel and a blasphemy against God, and an outrage on every thing like reason, or affection, in man. It is also a corrupting and perverting force in life. It flatters men to think that they can mock at God and defy His laws, and escape the consequences. It proclaims the monstrous lie that sin and woe do not go together. It virtually offers a premium to vice by telling men that it is pleasant, and that, however long they may pursue it, they can, by repentance, wipe out the account on God's books against them, and thus not only avoid all the renunciations of Religion and secure all the delights of sin, but fare just as well as the most religious, at last;—and by its false representations and vicious

principles, it makes God a Despot,—Religion a penance —and Heaven the consideration of a bargain. I know there are a great many excellent people who believe, or who think they believe, this doctrine. I have many cherished friends, whom I honor and dearly love, who think they believe it. But I hold it up, nevertheless, and expose and denounce it as fearfully corrupting and dangerous; and not until it, so false and so pernicious, dies out of the public thought and faith, and *our* doctrine of God, and Christ, and Retribution, takes its place, can we expect to see that understanding of the nature of sin, and that abhorrence of it, which shall prepare the world to appreciate the highest motives to goodness, and cause Christendom to blossom and become fragrant and fruitful in the best results of Christian love and life.

It is one of the most hopeful circumstances of the present time, that this doctrine of ours is so widely displacing the old theory—displacing it even in so-called evangelical pulpits and Churches, and making its way —slowly, it may be, but surely, towards the mastery of the general thought. See its worth, and accept and bid it God-speed, I pray you, ye who have not heretofore believed it, rejoicing in its light, and confessing the efficiency of its motives; and as those especially charged with its illustration and defence, let us who believe it, see to it that we give no ground for any one to suspect its healthy or restraining power. By lives harmonized with God and His law, and devoted to the highest ends of being, let us show that we believe in the reality of God's moral rule—here, now, every day,

every hour. Let us show, indeed, that we are no purchased hirelings among the sons and daughters of God. Let us show that we love and serve Him from higher motives than any thought of penalty or pay—because God is God, and Good is Good; but let our undeviating and incorruptible devotion to the Right attest that our characters are built on such firm convictions of the absolute verity of God's government, and the inexorable certainy of its awards, that, even if we could forget the noblest motives to goodness in the love of God, no temptation is strong enough to seduce us to invite the unescapable penalties of His Law, or to trifle with His just and inevitable Retributions.

VIII.

The Atonement.

"—by whom we have now received the atonement."—Rom. v. 11.

The reality and the necessity of the Atonement are admitted by all Christians. The New Testament, undeniably, everywhere ascribes an atoning, or reconciling, office and efficacy to Christ—furnishing thus, at the same time, the key of his mission, and the ground of our hope. Except to make the Atonement, we are assured, Christ would not have been born; and except as we receive the Atonement, we cannot be saved.

So far all are agreed. But what *is* the Atonement? Whom was it designed to affect? And why was it necessary? These questions, cleaving through the superficial general statements to which all can assent, take us directly into the heart of the subject, and show us, in few words, the points upon which believers in the Atonement radically and irreconcilably differ.

The common doctrine, as you are aware, makes the Atonement literally an expiation,—to use the term by which the doctrine is commonly designated, a *vicarious* expiation. Let the believers of the doctrine themselves define it. "Atonement," says Buck, in his Theological Dictionary, "is the satisfying Divine justice by Jesus Christ giving himself a ransom for us, undergoing the

penalty due to our sins, and thereby releasing us from that punishment which God might justly inflict upon us." "The Lord Jesus," says the Westminster Confession, "by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given him." "The thing which most manifestly characterizes this system," says Albert Barnes, "is the doctrine of *substitution*—or, the fact that God bestows upon us pardon and life, in consequence of what His Son has done and suffered in our stead."

These statements are frank and explicit. They show that the *gist* of this hypothesis is, as an eminent orthodox publication once stated it, that Christ's "sufferings were endured, and his death submitted to, as an expiatory sacrifice for sin,—as a satisfaction to the law which men have violated, and as an expedient by which God can consistently and honorably forgive those who have transgressed." In other words, the Atonement is a device for the reconciliation of God to man—or to enable Him to pardon sinners. The theory is, that all mankind, having sinned against God, are justly deserving of endless woe as the penalty of their sin, but that Christ offered himself, or was accepted, as the substitute for men, enduring in their stead an equivalent for the penalty thus incurred. Justice being thus satisfied, and the honor of the Law vindicated, the way is open for us, through faith, to obtain an interest in Christ's obedience, and thus to "make our peace with God," and to escape from hell, and get safe into heaven.

Formerly, it was customary to represent God as angry, burning with wrath against us, and intent on our destruction, but as appeased by the opportunity of wreaking His vengeance on His Son. The sword of God's vindictive justice, alleged a favorite figure for the illustration of the Atonement, was ready to descend upon the doomed souls of mankind, when Christ interposed, receiving upon himself the blow intended for them, and thus, as Watts has expressed it in one of his hymns,

> "Quenched his Father's flaming sword
> In his own precious blood."

Old books of theology, and old hymns, are full of such representations, as the speech of the Church still preserves phrases and methods of expression which could only have thus originated. But such a view of God is too gross, too monstrous for the softening and improving religious sentiment of the people. Conscience and reverence have rebelled against it as blasphemy. To a wide extent, therefore, it has given place to a modified theory, which alleges that, though we have sinned, God loves us and always has loved us, and that Christ suffered in our stead—not to appease God, but only to satisfy the demands of justice, and vindicate the honor of the Divine Law. This *seems* to put the subject into a less repulsive form: but the essential principle remains the same, and the Atonement is still, in substance, a reconciliation of God to man; a substitution of the sufferings of the innocent Christ for the punishment of guilty men, as the condition of God's mercy; a device

to appease or satisfy justice, that God might forgive His children—as if one of you parents, having a disobedient child, should say to him, I cannot forgive you until I have had "satisfaction," by putting one of your obedient brothers or sisters to the torture in your stead! Even Albert Barnes, so sensible a man, and so clear a thinker as he sometimes is, has not hesitated to cite the old story of the barbarous king, who, having made a barbarous law, himself endured part of the penalty, that his son, who was the first offender, might thus escape, as a fit illustration of the principle upon which God, through the Atonement, is enabled to be gracious to sinners!

Wholly different from all such ideas, however modified or explained, is *our* doctrine of the Atonement. We pronounce all such theories, not only unscriptural, but unreasonable, unnatural, unjust. We allege that they are utterly irreconcilable with the spirit of the New Testament; that they graft into Christianity the old heathen superstition of appeasing the Deity, and degrade the government of God into a likeness to the most vindictive and barbarous of the governments of men. The Atonement, we say, is not something once made or done in Jerusalem, or on Calvary—an expiation, complete when Christ suffered and died for us. It is a continuous, ever-operative work, stretching on parallel with the history of Christianity, and seen wherever souls are reconciled to God. Christ's sufferings and death are not the Atonement; they are only among the means to secure it. These means were furnished once for all when Christ lived, taught,

suffered, died, and rose again; but *the Atonement* is an ever new fact, that occurs wherever, and as often as, a soul is touched by Christ's appeals, and quickened into newness of life. Not in what *Christ suffered*, but in what *man becomes*, we believe, is the Atonement to be seen. In no way, we allege, was it the design of any thing in Christ's history, or experience, to affect God, or to change His feelings, or relations, towards us. Always our Father and Friend, He never needed to be changed; and unchangeable by nature, He could not have been changed, if it had been desirable that He should be.

As little, we further say, was the Atonement designed to satisfy justice, to honor a broken law, or in any way, or in any sense, to substitute Christ's sufferings for our punishment, that we might escape what we deserve. Christ's sufferings were in no way penal or expiatory; only such as came to him in the faithful discharge of the work appointed him. No law can ever be honored by the punishment of the innocent instead of the guilty; nor can justice ever accept or allow such a substitution. To *atone* is to *make-at-one*, or to reconcile; and to *make atonement* is to effect such a reconciliation, or *at-one-ment*, between those unreconciled. In our ignorance and our sin, we are unreconciled to God;—separated from Him;—"enemies" to Him "by wicked works." This is the constant representation of the New Testament, as to the condition of our race. We are sheep wandering from the fold. We are prodigals, estranged from our Father's house. We are treasure, lost and needing to be found. And the purpose of Christ, in all

that he was and did, is as constantly represented to be, to find the lost ;—to lead back the wandering ;—to assure the prodigal of their Father's love, and guide them home in a state of *at-one-ment* with Him. Hence, the apostle says in the text—the only place in which the word "*atonement*" occurs in the New Testament—"by whom (Christ), *we* have now received the Atonement"—or *the reconciliation*, as it stands in the margin. The allusion evidently is to that reconciling power of the Gospel, by which they had been brought into their new attitude towards God, consecrated to His service. Hence, also, he says in another place, (2 Cor. v. 18, 19,) expounding the design of God in Christ, "all things are of God, who"—*not*, observe, hath become reconciled to us, or hath enabled Himself to be gracious to us ; but "*hath reconciled us to Himself* by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation—to wit, that God was in Christ"—*not*, observe again, reconciling Himself to the world, or providing "an expedient" by which He might consistently pardon those who believe, but—"*reconciling the world unto Himself*, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Hence, also, the testimony of John, (1 John iv. 9, 10,) "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that *we might live* through Him. Herein is love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation—or the manifestation of mercy—for our sins." And to the same effect, Paul says, (Rom. v. 8, 10,) "But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ

died for us. . . . For if, when we were enemies, *we were reconciled to God* by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

This, then is *our* doctrine of the Atonement—clearly stated in Bible language. I will not dwell further, to set it forth, nor to point out its evident advantages over the prevalent theory, on the score of its naturalness, reasonableness, or harmony with our best moral and religious instincts. Our work is simply with its Practical Superiority. And to one who looks at all at principles, or considers the tendency of moral ideas, the grounds upon which this superiority may be affirmed cannot fail to be apparent.

I. It may be affirmed, *because this doctrine of ours shows the plan of redemption to be most perfectly a manifestation of God's mercy.* I scarcely need say what, by common consent, is the grand instrumentality for the salvation of souls. It is confessed to be the love of God for a sinful and perishing world. "The moral power of the Bible is in the love of God," high orthodox authority has said. And however they may sometimes seem to rely on something else, and argue as if this were not sufficient, even the most strenuous so-called evangelical believers, in their moments of highest thought, will confess that this, after all, is the only lever that can move the world. It does not need to be argued, then, that the doctrine which makes the love of God most apparent, and most presses it upon the conscience and the heart, must, other things being equal, be the most of a Christian power. It is on this ground that I make the point now before us.

So far as the theory of a Vicarious Atonement really determines one's conceptions of God and the spirit of His government, so far the sense of His kindness *must* be lessened, and He can be seen only in an aspect of severity, or of pitiless and vindictive justice—which is but another name for injustice. Though rejecting the old representation of an angry God, to be appeased, and affirming that the *plan* of the Atonement originated in love, such an one must still believe that "the *atonement itself* consisted in such displays of the Divine anger, or justice, inflicted on Christ, as were a proper substitute for the everlasting misery due to men." This is the essential idea of the theory. Hence, Christ is constantly pointed to as our substitute, enduring the vengeance of God in our stead, and we are taught to see the awful and unbending severity of the Divine law satisfied by his sufferings, and only thus able to permit our salvation. "Sin is pardoned and removed," says Albert Barnes, "only by his substituted suffering." I have, of course, no disposition, to deny that there is much in this view of the Atonement to interest the heart in CHRIST, and to touch it with a sense of his love, so far as *the reality* of his humiliation and sufferings for our sake can be assumed; but I ask you, what there is in it to appeal to our affections with respect to God,—to impress us with any sense of His mercy, or to attract us with any cordiality of feeling towards Him? Even if we see that He supplied the substitute as a means of showing us mercy, we are appalled and repulsed at the idea of a severity that could forgive only on such a condition; His mercy is shown to be only a

purchased and formal mercy; and it is impossible for us to be so affected in view of it, as if we saw Him bending over us in compassion,—sending His Son simply to give us His truth, and to assure us of His love, and reaching out His arms of infinite and unpurchased mercy, ready freely to forgive us, on the simple condition that we will love Him.

Suppose I were owing you a debt, which would most impress me with a sense of your kindness, and beget in me most a feeling of grateful obligation, for you to say, Here, my friend, I cancel your account, and freely give you the debt,—or, I have concluded to strip one of my children of his property, and put him into prison as your substitute, for the sake of relieving you? Or, suppose I had in some way sinned against you, and you should contrive to forgive me by hanging up one of your children, or some dear friend, on the public square, inflicting upon him the penalty of my offence:—could I see in such a display of your character, as much to interest me in you,—to attract me towards you,—to cause me to love you in a sense of your favor, as though you should say, I am your friend, notwithstanding you have so sinned against me; here 's my hand as the pledge of a loving heart; only show me that you are sorry, and the past shall be forgotten? Such questions need not be pressed. The answer is apparent, and at once exhausts the subject, by demonstrating the Practical Superiority of our doctrine of the Atonement in this particular. In the nature of things, it cannot be that a *purchased* pardon, such as the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement affirms, can so appeal to and affect the heart,

as a *free* pardon, granted in an unpurchased mercy, such as *our* doctrine alleges.

II. Let us pass, then, to say, somewhat more at length, that this advantage is to be claimed, *because this doctrine presents a better example in God.* The common doctrine of the Atonement presents God as acting upon principles, and after a method, in reference to His children, which not even its most strenuous defenders will venture to copy, and upon which no man or woman could act, in a single instance, without provoking the condemnation of all Christendom. This is a broad and very sweeping statement; but will any one contradict it? What *is* the common representation? That God could consistently forgive those who had sinned against Him, only by punishing, in their stead, one who had not sinned; and that the honor of His law could only be properly vindicated by such a vicarious infliction of its penalty, or its equivalent. And now, suppose you take this principle, and carry it into your homes, for the government of your families, or into our schools, as the rule of dealing with our children there; or, suppose we should all adopt it as our law of action in the intercourse of society, and in all the affairs of life:—what would be the consequence?

Who can tell what would be the consequence? Where would be the forbearing and forgiving spirit, some measure of which we do now see, and yet of the absence of which we so frequently think we have reason to complain? Where should we find anything like the placable and indulgent temper, which we are all

so ready to approve, but which few of us can say we sufficiently cherish? Everything of this nature would disappear. Our homes would be presided over by a spirit sterner than the code of Draco, though that was written in blood; and the intercourse of life would be regulated upon principles which would make forbearance and spontaneous forgiveness impossible. If one of your children disobeyed you, there would be no way for you to receive that child again to your favor, until you had first vindicated your authority by wreaking your dipleasure upon the most loving and faithful member of your family. If a pupil disobeyed in one of our schools, there could be no reconciliation till the teacher had inflicted the penalty of his violated law upon his most studious and exemplary scholar. Our streets would be lined with gibbets, and whipping-posts, and instruments of torture, and our ears would be filled with the groans of innocent substitutes, suffering the vicarious penalties imposed upon them, that neighbors and friends might forgive offences against them, and be reconciled to each other. If this doctrine be true, the duellist does well to demand "satisfaction," and the war-maker is right to insist on revenge.

Does any one think I overstate the case? Let such an one take the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement, in the least offensive form in which it can be stated, and tell me how, adopting the principle it furnishes, such results could be avoided? What is there here—I will not ask that is in any way fitted to beget, or nurture, but that can warrant, or tolerate, a placable and merciful spirit in our dealings with those who have sinned

against us? Our Lord says, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you," and "if thy brother repent, forgive him," that you may thus be like God; but this doctrine says, If you would be like God, exact an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and never forgive an offending brother until some friend has expiated your displeasure in his stead! Surely, as has well been asked, "if God could not forgive without a display of His justice, why should men? If He must show His abhorrence of sin, and His vengeance against offenders, by inflicting evil on the innocent as their substitute, why must we not do so in the government of our children, and in all cases that may occur?" Why should we freely forgive, if the perfect God does not?

I tell you, my friends, as with regard to most of the other doctrines upon which the Church is so accustomed to insist as vital to the very existence of the Gospel, so with regard to this,—we have never yet begun to realize the outrage which it does to every attribute of the righteous God, whose name it so assumes to use, or the false and mischievous principles which it interpolates into the Divine government, under the pretence of vindicating its honor. Of this doctrine, as of its associate dogmas, we may say that it has become so familiar to us, and because of its familiarity, has so worn away our instinctive abhorrence of such a transaction as it alleges, that we fail to realize, except as something specially awakens us to reflection, how horrible, how blasphemous, how akin to whatever is worst in heathenism it is.

Dr. Channing once tried to illustrate the real character of this doctrine, by supposing God to have erected a gallows in the centre of the universe, on which, in order to pardon His children, He had publicly executed an infinite Being instead of the offenders—bidding all creatures in heaven and earth to fix their eyes on the fearful spectacle as the vindication of His justice, and as the most powerful enforcement of obedience and virtue. The illustration sent a thrill of horror through the religious circles of the land, and called forth intense remonstrances from the believers of the dogma thus represented. And yet, the illustration shows exactly what God has done if this doctrine be true; and the sensation thus occasioned was only the instinctive shudder of our nature at the doctrine, when taken out of the technicalities in which it had become fossilized, and presented in fresh terms, better fitted to express it. In all that is crude and monstrous in the superstitions of heathenism, there is nothing coarser, more vindictive, more cruel, than the transaction with which this doctrine charges God, when it tells us that He put His innocent Son to the torture, till He killed him, as an expedient for pardoning men; and you may search through all that is most shocking in the history, or the traditions, of mankind, and find nothing more horribly brutal than is involved in the statement that God could not forgive men, however sincere their repentance, until He, or the exactions of His law, had first been thus barbarously "satisfied." Under the name of justice, it charges God with infinite injustice; and professing to devise a method of mercy,

it invents a procedure under which the most implacable and unrelenting temper can be justified. If this doctrine be true, then Shylock, so vindictively insisting upon his pound of flesh and the fulfilment of his bond, is the only fitting type of the spirit of the Divine administration;—an administration, under which, as Dr. Channing once well said, "not the least transgression, not even the first sin of the dawning mind of the child, can be remitted without an infinite expiation."

I have dwelt thus long upon this point in the common doctrine of the Atonement, for the reason that it is so little realized, and because it only needs to be seen as it thus actually *is,* to insure the shuddering rejection of the doctrine as a libel against all that is good in God, and as an incalculably corrupting force in life. Moreover, whatever thus shows the immoral principles of the common view, effectually enforces the Practical Superiority of ours. While nothing in the course of nature can be pointed to as corresponding to what is alleged by the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement, *our* doctrine shows the Atonement to be in keeping with the universal order of things, under which blessings come to us through mediators, and we are benefitted through the toils, sacrifices, and sufferings of others. No principle is affirmed,—no method of action is attributed to God,—no example is supplied, that may not profitably be copied by us, and that would not, if copied, make life gentler, kinder, more considerate and tender, more forbearing and forgiving. God loves us, this doctrine tells us—loves us in our sins, and even while we are offending against Him; and

cherishing this forgiving spirit towards us, He is seeking to make us aware of His love in the mission of His Son, and thus to reconcile us to Himself. Love, all-embracing and unconquerable,—love that beareth all things, and that never faileth, calling the most wayward, children, and pleading with the prodigal, Be ye reconciled to me—*this* is the picture of God, which our doctrine of the Atonement furnishes. This example, imitated in our homes, would make our families below, patterns of God's family above ; and imitated in the intercourse of the world, it would soon show us the Lord's prayer answered, in God's kingdom come, and His will done on earth even as in heaven.

III. The Practical Superiority of this Universalist doctrine of the Atonement will further appear, if we consider that *it promises no immunity to sin.* I will not repeat what was said in our last discourse, either as to the place which rewards and punishments should hold among our motives to right action, or as to the certainty with which Universalism assures us that whatsoever we sow, that shall we reap. I wish now barely to call your attention to the fact, that the scheme of a Vicarious Atonement is simply—I will not say an avowed device to cheat justice of its due, since the doctrine claims to satisfy justice ; but it is certainly an avowed device to enable the sinner to escape the punishment which he deserves. Believing in Christ as the atoning sacrifice, we are told, and thus becoming clothed with his imputed righteousness, we are freed, "through his availing blood," as the expression is, from

the penalty of our transgressions, and can cherish the full assurance of acceptance with God.

So far, then, as there is any moral worth in the certainty of a due retribution for sin, we aver that this doctrine is grossly immoral in its tendency, because serving thus to abate this certainty, and to beget the feeling that, however we may sin, faith in Christ will cancel all charges against us, and save us from all unpleasant consequences. Amidst the temptations and seducing influences of the world, men and women are thus taught to feel,—O, there is no essential connection between sin and punishment. God has provided a way for our escape, however we may transgress. We can disregard His law as we will, getting all the pleasure or advantage of doing as we please, and then repent and plead the atonement of Christ, and stand with our accounts all square, when the day of God's reckoning with us comes. It is exactly as if you should say to one inclined to extravagance, Never mind how much you get in debt; there is a bankrupt-law, under which you can, at any moment, get discharged from it all, and take a higher position in the estimation of the community than ever before. Or, as if you should say to one tempted to rob, Rob all you wish, and when you have pocketed all the gains you desire, turn about, and say that you are sorry, and you will be just as well off as if you had been an honest man.

Another thing. Have you never met with those who said, My peace is made with God; I am forgiven through the blood of Christ, and therefore my faults and sins will not be reckoned against me so severely

as though I were not thus forgiven? I do not know that I have ever chanced to talk with such an one myself; but I have often heard of such, and only the other day, a brother, here present, told me of a friend who had spoken to him of himself to this effect, and who was counting on a kind of immunity in sin, because he was a renewed man, accepted of God for Christ's sake. This was, in substance, the error of the old Antinomians; and such a feeling is the legitimate and logical result of the common doctrine of the Atonement. For, if Christ has cancelled my account, and I am safe because of his righteousness imputed to me through faith, what have I to fear, however I may live?

I cannot dwell. But I charge the common doctrine of the Atonement with a grossly demoralizing influence because of these things; and I claim the immeasurable advantage for *our* doctrine in the contrast. *This*, while showing the Atonement to be a display of infinite love, abates nothing from the certainty of retribution, and still proclaims, "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; *and there is no respect of persons.*" (Col. iii. 25.) Christ, we tell men, has nothing to do with saving us from any just punishment. If sin is committed, punishment must follow. This is the irrevocable law—from the operation of which Christ would not save us, if he could, and, except by a reorganization of our spiritual constitution, could not, if he would. He bears, and can bear no punishment due to us. Notwithstanding all he has done, we are still personally and rigidly accountable to God; and the only way in which we can escape punish-

ment, is to avoid sin. This being so, if there be really any moral worth in the thought of punishment, we feel that we are justified in claiming that the advantage is altogether with our doctrine, on this account.

IV. But still further: we claim this advantage, *because our doctrine best discloses the moral power of the Cross.* May I ask your special attention to this point? The doctrine of a vicarious expiation holds the moral power of the Cross to be only incidentally of any account; and the effect it has, in this respect, is one of the saddest things in connection with the mischievous influence of its teachings. It educates its believers to see the efficacy of the Atonement, only in the physical agonies which our Lord endured to appease God, or to satisfy His law. All the meaning of his steadfastness in duty;—all the lessons of his patience and trust;—all the significance of Gethsemane, and its agony, ending in such sweet resignation;—all the sublimity of his self-forgetful love;—all the pathos of his prayer for his murderers;—the entire import of the Cross and of the life of suffering which culminated there, as showing the enormity of sin which could so pursue, reject, and crucify one so God-like in his love and purity—all this, so far as the main purpose of Christ's sacrifice is concerned, is reckoned as nothing by the doctrine of vicarious substitution; and we are told that there is no meaning in his sufferings, unless God is seen as pouring out the vials of His wrath, or wreaking His justice upon him!

One writer, indeed, of no mean authority, has not hesitated to say—in language which all the writings of the coarsest infidels may in vain be challenged to exceed in the grossness of its irreverence—that Christ never manifested any extraordinary exemplary deportment; that if we disallow the doctrine of his vicarious sufferings, "his anguish and his cries, his bloody sweat in the garden, and his pitiful cry on the Cross, seem to be unmanly;" and that, if his object were to give an example, and to exert a moral power, "*he has most miserably failed!*" Remember—this is not the language of an infidel, but of a so-called evangelical Doctor of Divinity, arguing for the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement! Think—what must be the blinding, materializing, deadening influence of a doctrine, which will not only *permit*, but *compel* its disciples to talk thus of the example and sufferings of our Lord! Do I say too much, then, when I say that such a doctrine holds the moral power of the Cross as, primarily, of no account, and only sees the efficacy of the Atonement—not in the spirit which transfused and glorified the sufferer, and which appeals to us to respond to his love, but in the mere physical anguish which he endured as the punishment of our sin?

There are those, no doubt, among the believers of this doctrine, who recognize some incidental influence for good in Christ's example in suffering, and who feel themselves moved and attracted towards him by the spirit in which he suffered. Preaching on this subject on one occasion, I greatly offended such an one by saying what I have now said, as to the little or no value

assigned by the doctrine of vicarious suffering to the moral power of the Cross. And yet, even such, if they are at all candid, must confess that the exertion of any such moral influence on us formed no part of the primary and most essential purpose of the Cross. *That* concerned *God*, or *His law*—as a satisfaction of justice, and *not us*—as a means of moral power. Accordingly, have you never observed that *this*—and *not* the moral power of the Cross, is the topic upon which preachers of a vicarious atonement chiefly dwell—"as if there were some mysterious connection between Christ's physical agonies and our salvation?"

Need I say how different it is with *us?* To us, the Cross is only the symbol of a moral power. Christ's sufferings have no meaning to us, and no worth in our view, except as the frame of his virtue, heroism, and self-sacrifice; as the glass through which we look into his soul, and discern the grandeur of his spirit. Except as the pedestal of the character which he exhibits, his Cross is no more than any other. "The meekness and the fortitude with which he suffered,—the disinterestedness, the faith in God, and the love for man, which he displayed,—the moral qualities which he exhibited and embalmed," and which speak evermore to us, asking, Shall all this example of excellence and of devotion to your good be in vain?—*these*, we believe, are the things that give efficacy to the sufferings and Cross of Christ, and by the power of which, he, being lifted up, shall yet draw all men unto him. And because our doctrine thus directs attention, not to what he suffered, but to the moral purpose for which he suf-

fered,—not to the Cross as a symbol of vengeance, but as the throne of a great soul, and as an appeal to our hearts, it has, we believe, a moral worth, which the doctrine of Vicarious Atonement can never justly claim.

Nor is this all. Our doctrine of the Atonement makes Christ's life as important as his death, and includes the whole sum of his character and example among the means of our salvation. The common doctrine puts asunder what God has thus joined together, and so divides and dissipates the power of Christ over us. But to *us*, he is a unit; and every word that he spake, every act he performed, every quality he exhibited, his victory over death and his ascension to his Father, as well as the sufferings he endured and the death he died, contribute to the efficacy of his Atonement, and conspire to make him unto us the power of God and the wisdom of God for our salvation. But on this, I cannot dwell; and I pass, therefore, to remark,

V. Finally, that we claim the Practical Superiority for our doctrine, *because it presents the Atonement as designed to affect us, and not to affect God.* This, after all, is the most important fact in the case. We are weak; sinful; to too great an extent indifferent to the will of God, and accustomed to live on a lower plane and out of lower principles than He demands, and than our highest character and best good require. *This we know*—not only because the Bible so represents us, but because our observation and experience so testify. Under these circumstances, we require nothing so much as to be made aware of our condition

and of our need of improvement, that we may be awakened to that change of taste and purpose, which will insure our acceptance with God, in a filial conformity to Him. But what power has the common doctrine of the Atonement to produce such a result? I shall not deny, of course,—I shall, of course, readily concede, that there have been many pure and sincere Christian men and women who have believed this doctrine. Of course, too, I have no disposition to overlook or deny that, in connection with it, numerous admonitions to purity are preached, and that, even as thus presented, Christ pleads with us for our love. But, taking the doctrine in itself, and judging it by what it is, and in view of its legitimate and most natural tendency, I ask, What is there in it to produce the kind of results to which I have referred?

Look at it:—what does it do? It directs our attention—*not*, as our primary occasion of concern, to evils within ourselves;—*not* to our meanness, littleness, dishonesty, or sin;—*not* to our frailties of temper, our impatience, or our regnant selfishness;—but to exposures external to us—to our danger in consequence of God's attitude towards us. It is not, according to this doctrine, because *we* are impure, selfish, unreconciled to God, that we have reason for alarm: It is because God is unreconciled to us;—because the demands of His justice are impending over us;—and because, therefore, we are in danger of going to hell. *Were it not for hell*, the doctrine is, *we should have no need of Christ.* He died, we are told,—and it is insisted that we shall believe—*not* to awaken us to a consciousness of our-

selves and our Father, and thus to amend our characters and help us out of what is unworthy of us, on to a plane of virtue like his own, but to satisfy God's justice, and make it possible for us, through His purchased favor, to get to heaven. As the result, we are given to understand, faith is *not*, primarily, a means of moral correction and regeneration, the channel through which his quickening and saving power flows into us, but simply a kind of price we pay for enough of interest in Christ to purchase an escape from hell,—the consideration of the bargain on our part, required—not that we may grow into a likeness of his righteousness, but that his righteousness may be imputed to us, and our title to heaven be thus secured.

This is the theory—perfectly according, in its essence, with all the religions of heathendom and of man's device, in representing that the paramount concern of men is, to make God favorable to them, and not to put themselves into harmony with Him. And this being the theory, must not its influence inevitably be to turn away the thought of its believers from themselves, and their own faults and sins, to God and His controversy with them? Must it not, therefore, be to educate them to feel that, when they have once believed in God, and so have purchased His favor, the main work of Christianity is done for them,—if they are but careful to pay the due penance of prayer, and church-going, and the required forms of religious living? And—I ask the question without intending any unkind or ungenerous reflections, and fully acknowledging the many excellent and truly pious persons to be found among the

believers of the doctrine,—referring simply to well-known and undeniable facts, is not the kind of piety that too widely prevails, a piety which confirms the statement that this is the tendency of what is thus believed?

With nothing of this can *our* doctrine be charged. This points us to whatever is mean, unworthy, or sinful *in ourselves*, as that to which the Atonement refers, and which it is designed to correct. Christ has come, we are thus assured—not to get us into heaven, by-and-by, under the cloak of his righteousness imputed to us, but *to get heaven into us*, by the inspirations of his life, and truth, and Cross, forming us into a righteousness like his own. He has come to make us, or rather to help us to be, pure,—disinterested,—conscientious,—loving,—consecrated to duty,—men and women in the largest and noblest sense. Except so far as we are thus affected, we are assured, the Atonement in respect to us has not yet been made. Every call we hear from Christ, therefore, is a call to endeavor and excellence; and as he stands before us, it is as the type of excellence,—God's constant rebuke of meanness, selfishness, and sin, and His constant call to penitence, purity, and peace.

"Do you remember," Mrs. Stowe makes one of her characters say to another, in her story of the "Minister's Wooing," "Do you remember you told me once that, when the snow first fell and lay so dazzling and pure and soft, all about, you always felt as if the spreads and window curtains that seemed white before were dingy? Well, its just like that with me. Your

presence makes me feel that I am not pure,—that I am low and unworthy—not worthy to touch the hem of your garment; and when I see you, I am made to feel that I should like to be as good as you." Who of us has not felt like this in the presence of some pure and beautiful soul, standing, as we have been conscious, far above us in the elevation of a noble life? And this is what God has given us Christ for—that he might kindle us to such a feeling in his presence, and so quicken us into love with goodness, and, through him, reconcile and attract us to Himself. *This is the Atonement*, we are assured,—addressed to *us*,—appealing to *us*, through all that Christ was, and did, and taught; through the life he lived; through the sufferings he endured; through the death he died; from the Cross on which he hung; from the right hand of God where he now sits, our Comforter and Saviour:—and the one meaning of it all is, that we will yield ourselves to the rebuking and assimilating power of his life, and looking at his faith, and love, and fidelity, take on his image, as we believe, and love, and obey, like him.

And this being the Atonement, as we believe, thus directed to us, and designed to make us sons and daughters of God, worthy of our Father, in a moral likeness to Him, may we not confidently claim for our doctrine concerning it, as a Practical Power, the superiority over any and all other views of the subject with which it can be compared?

I will not detain you farther, by tarrying to say what the subject, as thus presented, plentifully suggests. Sure I am that no one can have candidly attended to

the considerations now submitted, without feeling that the claim I have been asserting is indisputable, and that an unanswerable argument is thus furnished for the truth of the doctrine, the practical advantage of which can so clearly be affirmed. Will you who have not heretofore accepted it, appreciate this argument for its truth, and believe it, and honor it in a good life? Above all, my brother or sister, already believing it, and to whom the world justly looks for an illustration of its superior efficacy, if superior it is, will *you* appreciate its meaning and the appeals it urges upon you, and be the pure, aspiring, and morally earnest and consecrated man or woman, that—unless all I have been saying is false—it is fitted to make you, and that you ought to be? Vainly, for any purpose of convincing unbelievers, do I stand here and prove, by no matter what force of argument, that Universalism is, in its principles, and ought to be, in its results, the most efficient Christian power, if, by the tone and quality of your daily lives, you prove that, practically, it is not so. Do not, I pray you, thus defeat the purpose for which the truth is proclaimed. Do not, by indifference, or dishonesty, by wine-bibbing, or any impurity,—do not, by religious coldness, by a neglect of prayer, by an evident want of any spirit of consecration, by a lack of any responsiveness to the appeals of the Father and the Saviour as pressed upon us in our faith—do not belie all my preaching, and all your professions and arguments, and give your lives to disprove the Gospel you should illustrate and enforce. Ready to argue for the claim in behalf of Universalism which I am here

enforcing, and especially for the quickening efficacy of our doctrine of Christ, and the Cross, and their atoning office, live, all of you—fathers and mothers, young men and maidens, appreciating all that this world has of good,—ready to work,—ready to enjoy all rational and innocent pleasure as you have opportunity, but live always with Christ in your thoughts, and in a becoming sense of his *at-one-ing* work ; and as that life of his rises in such matchless perfection before you, appealing to you in its purity, and his voice pleads with you from the wilderness, where he was tempted,—from the mountain and the sea-shore, where he taught,—from the garden, where he agonized,—from the judgment-hall, where he was buffeted and spit upon,—from the Cross, where he suffered,—from the Right Hand of God, where he dwells, saying always,—Come unto me,—abhor sin,—love God, and give yourselves to His service,—Oh, will you not reply, in a sense of what he is and of what he deserves—

"Yes, sacred Teacher, we *will* come,—
Obey thee, love thee, and be blest."

IX.

Forgiveness.

"Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions."—Psalm xcix. 8.

The fact seems to be universally recognized, that the harmony of man's relations to God has been disturbed: and the question, which the various forms of Religion in the world are but so many attempts to answer, is, How shall the harmony of these relations be restored, and acceptance with God be secured?

To this question, the doctrine of Divine Forgiveness is the Christian answer. It is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, as it is, also, peculiar to it. It is the doctrine in which the Gospel especially adjusts itself to our needs as sinners. Nature proclaims a just and beneficent God, but it nowhere reveals how our broken moral relations to Him can be repaired. Every religion of human invention has invariably assumed, that something must be done to propitiate God, as the condition of His favor; and altars have smoked, and human sacrifices have bled,—penances have been performed, and sufferings of expiation have been endured, that this propitiation might be effected. Even Christians, sharing in this assumption, have overlooked the peculiarity of the religion of the Bible, and invented the doctrine of a vicarious atonement. The Bible alone,

as we saw in our last discourse, shows us a God that needs not to be propitiated, and Christ sums up all the conditions to Divine acceptance in the simple message, Repent, love, and be forgiven.

That this doctrine of Divine Forgiveness is a truth of the Gospel;—that the Gospel, indeed, is but a stupendous system of grace, designed to assure us of God's readiness to forgive, and to lead us into those relations to Him in which we may be forgiven; and that no words can exaggerate the importance of this fact to us as those who have sinned, and need to be forgiven, are statements in which all Christians agree. But when it is asked in reference to Forgiveness, *what? why? how?* and *how many?*—and the details of the doctrine are thus defined, *we* find ourselves very widely differing from the mass of the Christian world.

The whole system of the popular theology, as was said last Sabbath afternoon, rests upon the assumption that, in the words of the Westminster "Shorter Catechism,"—words adopted by all who call themselves "evangelical Christians,"—"every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come," and, therefore, that all who have sinned have justly incurred the penalty of endless woe. "As sinners," to quote eminent evangelical authority, "all are under the sentence of death by God's righteous law, and excluded from all hope and mercy."

I heard a very remarkable sermon on this subject, preached by Rev. Dr. Rice, of this city, last Sunday evening—remarkable, not for any extraordinary ability, but for the conclusions for which it argued. According

to this sermon—delivered as one of a series of authoritative expositions of what are called evangelical doctrines—God has given us a law which it is utterly impossible, in the nature of things, for us to obey, and the only possible effect of which is, and must be, to doom us to His endless condemnation. That is to say, —doing what, if done by any human parent, ruler, or legislature, would be pronounced, either the extreme of folly, or the extreme of cruelty—God has framed His law without any reference to the ability of those who are subject to it, and exercises His government over them *only to exact what, as He has constituted them, they cannot perform*, and thus to necessitate that they shall be criminals, even if they do their utmost to obey Him! This is the received doctrine; and proceeding upon this strange assumption, the common theory alleges that Forgiveness, or justification, is a remission of the fearful penalty thus incurred, granted on account of the intercession of Christ, and because of his endurance of the curse of the law in our stead. "Justification," according to the "Shorter Catechism," —and according also to the Methodist Catechism, which uses nearly the same words—" is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." What this definition means by *the pardon of our sins*, is shown by Buck, in his Theological Dictionary. "Pardon," he says, is "the act of forgiving an offender, or removing the guilt of sin, *that the punishment due to it may not be inflicted*,"—or, as

he says in another place, "Pardon *frees from punishment.*" With this agrees Calmet, another distinguished authority, who says that pardon is the "*entire remission of punishment due to guilt.*"

According to this theory, Forgiveness, under the Divine Government, is analogous to pardon under human governments, and is usually illustrated by it. One who has been condemned to imprisonment, or to death, for example, through the intercession of friends, or the clemency of the pardoning power, is released from the penalty, and permitted to go unpunished. So, this theory alleges, through Christ's intercession and substitution in our behalf, the penalty of endless woe is remitted, and we are forgiven and justified by being permitted to escape our just deserts, and to get into Heaven. Hence the idea, so almost universal, that there can be no forgiveness unless punishment is remitted, and that to say that all deserved punishment will be inflicted, is to leave nothing to be forgiven, and to deny the mercy of God.

Our doctrine of Forgiveness proceeds upon entirely different principles. In the first place, we deny the fundamental assumptions of the common view, as irrational and unscriptural. We deny that God has given us a Law, which it is impossible for us to obey, and allege that the proclamation of such a law would absolve us from all obligation to obey it,—since it is a clear principle of morals that we are under no obligation to do what we have no power to do. We deny the infinite nature of sin—holding it as self-evident that a finite being cannot do an infinite act. We deny that endless

punishment is the penalty of God's law — affirming that God's law is just, and that such a penalty would be infinitely unjust. We deny, therefore, that any soul is exposed to such a penalty—except, indeed, as, without some effectual provision for our salvation, we should be exposed to an endless continuance in sin,—and hence we deny that there was any occasion for Christ's sacrifice, or intercession, to procure our release from such a doom, or our forgiveness in any such sense. We deny that there was any necessity or any possibility for Christ to purchase our pardon, or that we are pardoned for his sake, in the sense alleged by the Church. To affirm what the Church thus affirms, is to say that God has condemned the righteous for the justification of the guilty,—while the Bible solemnly declares that "he that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, *even they both are abomination to the Lord.*" (Prov. xvii. 15.)

Nor do we rest in these *denials*. We point to the purpose of pardon under human governments, and say, that to make God's forgiveness of us in any way analogous to such pardon, is to charge Him with human frailty and liability to mistake. And this is a point to which I invite your special attention, as one not at all understood as it should be.

What does this power of pardon in the constitution of human governments mean, and why is it allowed? Let legal authorities themselves give the answer. The "Law Dictionary,"* a standard work, says, "This high prerogative (the power of pardon) the king is entrusted

* Tomlins', by Granger.

with, upon a special confidence, that he will spare *those only*, whose case, could it have been foreseen, the law itself may be presumed willing to have excepted out of its general rules, *which the wisdom of man cannot possibly make so perfect as to suit every particular case*." Chancellor Kent, recognized as among the highest authorities in legal science, says, "The Marquis Beccaria has contended, that the power of pardon does not exist under a perfect administration of law, and that the admission of the power is a tacit acknowledgment of the infirmity of the courts of justice." And having thus stated the position as taken by another, the Chancellor proceeds to say for himself,—and I beg you to mark his language—"Where is the administration of justice, it may be asked, that is free from infirmity? Were it possible, in every instance, to maintain a just proportion between the crime and the penalty, and were the rules of testimony and the mode of trial so perfect as to preclude every possibility of mistake or injustice, there would be some color for this plausible theory."* It is, indeed, but proper to say, that he expresses the conviction, that "policy would sometimes require a remission of a punishment strictly due for a crime, certainly ascertained,"—for the reason that, in his judgment, such clemency would contribute "to the more firm establishment of [a] government." But he shows the ground on which he chiefly rests the expediency and necessity of this pardoning power, by adding that it "will appear to be the more essential, when we consider that, under the most cor-

* Commentaries, Lec. xiii.

rect administration of the law, men will sometimes fall a prey to the vindictiveness of accusers, the inaccuracy of testimony, and the fallibility of jurors." While seeming to dissent from Beccaria, then, it is evident that his dissent is rather in form than in fact, and that, having regard to an "administration of justice," which has no occasion to consider "policy" with a view to its "more firm establishment," because founded on absolute principle, and, therefore, absolutely "free from infirmity," he would accept Beccaria's proposition, and say that *such* an administration would need no pardoning power. Blackstone's treatment of the subject is substantially the same. Though he apparently dissents from Beccaria's position, he does so in terms which conclusively show that, *if* there were a tribunal entirely competent for "construing the criminal law by the spirit instead of the letter," and entirely competent, therefore, to administer justice with due "distinction in the punishment," on account of "the situation and circumstances of the offender," the position would, in his opinion, be entirely sound.

It was upon these general principles, that Governor Banks, in the address to his Council, referred to in a former discourse, took his very decided stand against the frequency of pardons, saying, among other things, that "the executive . . . *ought never to intervene*, [in the way of pardon,] except when in possession of such facts as lead directly to the conclusion that neither

* Sharswood's Blackstone, Book IV. p. 397. Judge Story takes essentially the same view, in his Commentaries, Book III. Chap. xxxvii.

legislative nor judicial tribunals, being in possession of the same knowledge, would have framed or applied the law;" in other words, except in cases of mistake, or of non-responsibiliy, on some account. In addition, he cited the passage from the Marquis Beccaria, above alluded to, which, he said, he had "ordered to be printed in letters of gold," to be hung in the Council Chamber. A portion of the extract is as follows: "Happy the nation in which clemency and pardon will be considered as dangerous! *Clemency . . . should be excluded in a perfect legislation. . . .* It is, indeed, one of the noblest prerogatives of the throne, but *at the same time a tacit disapprobation of the laws. . . .* The government, in pardoning, gives up the public security in favor of an individual, and by its ill-judged benevolence proclaims a public act of impunity."

You see, then, the answer to our question as to the meaning of this power of pardon under human governments. It is a concession of the imperfection of all such governments. It is a provision against the liability of all human tribunals to err, and is designed to retrieve and correct any mistakes of judgment, or misapprehensions of fact, by which one may have been unjustly condemned. What follows? Clearly, you perceive, that to allege this provision of pardon under the Divine Government is to allege that, under the Divine as under human government, *there is a liability to mistakes which need to be corrected,—to injustice which needs to be redressed,—to undue severity which needs to be provided against.* "Clemency should be excluded in *a perfect legislation*," says Beccaria; and were there a

tribunal, Blackstone instructs us, entirely competent to "construe the law by the spirit instead of the letter," and certain, therefore, to punish strictly in proportion to desert,—or, clearly intimates Chancellor Kent, were there "an administration of justice *free from infirmity*," or "*were it possible in every instance to maintain a just proportion between the crime and the penalty*, and . . . to preclude *every possibility of mistake or injustice*," there would be no need of a pardoning power.

From these statements, regarded simply as declarations of legal principles, few, probably, will be found to dissent. So evident are they, indeed, that the acutest advocates of the common doctrine of Forgiveness themselves see and confess them. To allege anything under the government of God corresponding to pardon under human governments, they admit, is to allege either that God's law is not perfect, or that its administration is not perfect. These are nearly the precise words of Dr. Rice, in the discourse to which I have referred—preparing thus for his argument to prove the necessity of Christ's sufferings in our stead. The sum of the argument was this:—that since God could not pardon as human governments do,—viz., by remitting the penalty, without confessing the imperfection either of His law, or of its administration, one of two things was inevitable,—viz., that somebody should bear its penalty in our behalf, or that the race should be hopelessly lost.

Evidently, Dr. Rice did not perceive,—none of those who argue after this method seem to perceive, that this theory of Christ's intervention as our substitute does

nothing to make it proper that the punishment should be remitted to *us*. The point of the difficulty is, that—as our so-called evangelical friends themselves concede—to remit the penalty of a law, as is done in the case of pardon by human governments, is to confess that the law or its administration is imperfect:—and this difficulty lies in the way of any and all remission, however purchased or granted. What the law demands is—not that *somebody* shall be punished, but that *those who have broken it shall* be punished. In no case, is even human law, in any civilized country, satisfied to accept a substitute for the offender—except as it is constructively done sometimes in the payment of debts or fines. But in such cases, the obligation or offence is simply technical, or legal. No element of *moral* guilt is involved. As soon as *that* comes in, even constructive substitution becomes inadmissible, and the very suggestion of it is revolting. Who could hear of the execution, or imprisonment, of an innocent person, that some murderer or thief should be pardoned, without crying out against it as monstrous? Or, under what law, or in what condition of society, could such a substitution be possible? The demand of the law is, I repeat, not that *somebody*, but that *the offender* shall be punished; and if there is any confession to the disadvantage of the law, or its administration, involved in a pardon which remits the appointed penalty, that confession is made *however those who have broken the law may be released from the penalty.* It does not matter, so far as this confession is concerned, whether the release be unconditional, or purchased. The confession

is made in *the release*, and not in *the method of granting it*. To punish the innocent that the escape of the guilty may be secured, is only to do by indirection the very thing which it is conceded cannot be directly done, without an imputation against the law, or its administration; and is, at the same time, to complicate the matter still further, by adding cruelty and the grossest injustice to the inevitable confession of imperfection.

Put the thing to the test of experiment. Suppose the President of the United States should say to some convicted felon, Sir, I cannot cancel the penalty pronounced upon you, because this would be to give judgment against the law, or your conviction, or sentence; but I will put some faultless citizen to the torture in your stead, and accepting his sufferings as yours, will account you innocent, and permit your escape. Is there a man or woman here, who would not say, Why, Mr. President, you have done unspeakably worse than though you had pardoned the man at once! If there is any good reason for his escape, you have confessed just as much against the law, or its administration, so far as he is concerned, as if nobody had been punished, while you have introduced an atrocious outrage into the case under the pretence of justifying the law, and have shown that it is a matter of indifference to you whether the innocent or the guilty are punished, if only somebody is made to suffer. Is there an intelligent man or woman in the country, or the world, who would not cry out against *such* a method of vindicating any law, and denounce, not only as barbarous, but as

villainous, such a roundabout way of releasing an offender from the punishment he deserved?

And yet, mark you, this is precisely the method which, it is alleged, has been adopted under the government of God, for the pardon of sinners on account of the sufferings of Christ! It is an indirect way of saying to sinners, The law is a dead letter so far as you are concerned;—you are released from the penalty it would inflict upon you. Of course, then, if this be so, there is, under the government of God, as under human governments, a power to pardon offenders by remitting the penalty they have incurred; and if it exists, it exists because there is a necessity for it. But if such a pardoning power—no matter how exercised—*is* needed, and does exist, under the Divine administration, what follows, according to the principles just now laid down? Necessarily, that God's legislation is *not perfect;*—that His administration is *not free* from infirmity;—that it does *not* in every instance maintain a just proportion between crime and its penalty; and that there *is* a possibility of mistake or injustice under it.

And is not *this*, after all, the idea which underlies and runs all through the prevalent theology?—the idea, viz., that punishment is *not* proportioned to crime under the Divine Government; that punishment is an arbitrary and extraneous penalty, imposed—not in the nature of things, nor with reference to the degree of guilt, nor with any design of doing the punished good, but as a terrific display of the Divine vengeance. Hence, the necessity of the power of pardon:—to release us from

this iron rule; to provide a way of escape from this remorseless and vindictive law, that, without thought of our good, lays upon us requirements with which we cannot comply, and then holds us in its terrible grasp, demanding our endless torment for not doing what we *cannot* do.

Surely, surely, we *need* some chance for escape from the hand of God, or from the penalty of His law, according to *such* a theory. But *our* theory of punishment requires no such provision for our escape. We believe in a God, under whose government there is not only no chance for mistake, but no chance for the infliction of any more punishment than is necessary, or than the good of the punished requires. "Clemency," says Beccaria, "is a virtue which ought to shine *in the code*, and not in private judgment;" and God's code, *we* believe, is *such* a code—a government of rigorous justice, indeed, but of infinite mercy, also. Punishment is, in every instance, proportioned to guilt, and is *so* proportioned that we shall receive no more than we need. Justice, in this respect, is only another name for mercy; and to remit any punishment that we really deserve, is to do us an unkindness instead of a favor—precisely as it would be doing an unkindness to a sick man, to remit an unpleasant medicine essential to his cure. It is an infinitely perfect adjustment of checks and balances, this wonderful and all-pervading economy that we call the Moral Government of God, in which *penalties* are made also *correctives*, and the Divine consideration for our welfare is manifest in the apparent evil it *inflicts*, no less than in the acknowledged good it bestows.

Hence, there is no need of a pardoning power, as under human administrations—since the remission of any penalty of God's perfect law can never be either necessary, just, or good.

Accordingly, turning now to the Bible, we find that it nowhere speaks of a forgiveness of *punishment*—only, and always, of *the forgiveness of sin.* Our text is but an illustration of the invariable tenor of the Bible, on this point. "Thou wast a God that forgavest *them*, though Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, . . . *forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin*, and *that will by no means clear the guilty.*" (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7.) "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and say unto her that . . . her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double (a strong eastern expression for a full equivalent) for all her sins." (Isa. xl. 2.) And this is the tone of the Bible throughout, agreeing thus, from beginning to end, with the declaration of the apostle, which I have quoted in former discourses, "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and *there is no respect of persons.*" (Col. iii. 25.)

What, then, *is* Forgiveness, or pardon, under the Divine Government? you are, perhaps, now ready to ask;—and if deserved punishment is never remitted, what does the Bible mean by the mercy, or grace, of God?

Several answers have been given to this question. Some have replied that Forgiveness is the taking, or sending away of sin;—that is, that to say we are for-

given, is the same as to say that our sin is removed, or that we sin no more. Others have maintained that pardon is a cancelling of our past obligations,—God's release of us from our past indebtedness to duty, and His acceptance of us as if we had been under no obligation to do the right we have neglected to do. But of these theories, it is enough to say, that the former puts the *occasion of forgiveness* for *forgiveness itself*, and that the latter makes forgiveness a *forgiveness of duty*, instead of *a forgiveness of sin*, and represents God as cancelling obligations which even He cannot cancel, ingrained as they are in the very nature of things, viz., our obligations to love, honor, and obey Him.

The more reasonable and scriptural doctrine, as it seems to me, is, that Forgiveness is the overlooking, or non-remembrance, of our sins, and our acceptance with God, through repentance, as if we had not sinned. Hence, the constant representation of Forgiveness, or pardon, as a blotting out of our transgressions:—as when God says, "If the wicked will turn from all his sins, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, all his transgressions that he hath committed, *they shall not be mentioned unto him*;" (Ezek. xviii. 21, 22;)—or, as when the apostle says that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not *imputing their trespasses unto them*." (2 Cor. v. 19.) The idea is, that when sin is forgiven, it is forgotten, as an occasion of separation between God and the soul; and, his sin being overlooked, the sinner is reëstablished in those relations of filial acceptance and communion, which sin has broken and destroyed.

In one sense, indeed, it must be conceded that there is, in *this* view of Forgiveness, a remission of something of the penalty of sin. The punishment that a continuance in sin would insure, of course, is not inflicted, and the relations forfeited—and which might still be held as forfeited—on account of sin, are restored. The man sent to prison until he reforms, for example, *when* he reforms, is spared the further confinement which his continued perversity would require. And, released from prison, on satisfactory evidence of his reformation, he is, *if forgiven*, released also from the penalty of exclusion from the confidence and companionship of the virtuous, which his crime has involved, and is thus restored to the same social standing and relations as if he had not offended. There can, of course, be no forgiveness of sin without a remission of the penalty of sin, to this extent.

But this is no forgiveness, or remission, of punishment, in any such sense as the common doctrine affirms. What is meant by *our* doctrine of Forgiveness is finely illustrated by the case of the Prodigal Son—Christ's own beautiful representation of the Divine Forgiveness. How was he forgiven?—and in what did his forgiveness consist? Did the glad father put some dutiful member of his family to the rack, in order that he might receive and forgive the prodigal? No such thing. He saw him "when he was yet a great way off, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Did the father cancel the consequences of the wanderer's prodigality and sin, so that there was no punishment for them? That he could not do. Every

day the poor prodigal had been absent in that far country, had been a day of retribution to him; and it was through what he thus suffered—the merciful, as well as the just, consequences of his course, that he was led to come to himself, and to resolve to go back, a penitent, to his home and the father from whom he had strayed. He was forgiven, because the past was all overlooked, —and because his father, instead of remembering his perversity and misconduct, and assigning him a place, as he justly might, among the hired servants, clasped him to his heart, and received him again into those intimate and cordial relations which he had broken, and into those filial privileges which he had forfeited. He had no claim to be thus received. It was only of his father's mercy, that he was so restored to the same position as if he had not sinned.

And thus it is with us, as the forgiven of God. We are forgiven, because, having fallen, through sin, we are restored to our position and privileges as the sons and daughters of God;—forgiven, not for Christ's sake, but for our own sake. We do, indeed, read in our translation of the Epistle to the Ephesians, (iv. 32,)—"even as God *for Christ's sake* hath forgiven you." But this is an unauthorized rendering of a word that means simply *in*, or *through*, and that is elsewhere so given; and this passage, if correctly put, would read, in harmony with the New Testament teaching everywhere else, "as God *in*, or *through*, Christ hath forgiven you." So when John says, in his first Epistle, (ii. 12,) "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you *for his* (Christ's) *name's sake*," we have a mistranslation of

another little word, signifying *through*, or *by the power of;* and the meaning is, "your sins are forgiven you *through*, or *by the power of*, his name, or his truth." I say, then, we are forgiven—not for Christ's sake,—*this* is nowhere the doctrine of the New Testament,—but for our own sake, and because we are the penitent children of God;—forgiven *through Christ*, or by means of what he has done to bring us home to the Father, but not for his sake, or on account of what he has suffered for us;—forgiven, not because we have any rights to plead, but because, in the riches of His infinite grace, God is willing to overlook our disloyalty, and to receive us freely to the fellowship and privileges of His children.

This, then, is *our* doctrine of Forgiveness—illustrated thus somewhat more at length than the doctrines we have previously considered, because of the several important principles involved, and because, also, I have supposed it one of those points in our faith least clearly understood, even by Universalists themselves. And coming now to its Practical Superiority, I remark,

I. That it has this superiority, *because it shows forgiveness as freely bestowed of God for our own sake, and not purchased,—granted for Christ's sake.* This was, in substance, one of the points of the last discourse, and may, therefore, be urged the more briefly now. The common view of Forgiveness, as we saw last Sunday afternoon, entirely obscures and destroys God's mercy, and shows no forgiveness but in name. Man owes the debt; Christ pays it. How, then, is it for-

given, or relinquished? The penalty of the law is inflicted; justice is satisfied, and, of course, has no more to demand. Why, then, have not those for whom Christ died a right to go free? What is there of mercy here? Or, what has any such view to move the heart, or to attract it towards God, compared with that which shows Him as, without need of intercession, or purchase, freely bestowing His favor upon His children, and pleading with them, through Christ, to love Him and be forgiven?

But there is another point in this connection, less thought of, but quite as important, to which I wish now particularly to direct your attention. One of the most vital conditions of elevated character is *self-respect*. We know what happens to a man or woman, and what is the direction of his or her path, when *this* is gone. Losing his pride of character, or feeling that he has no character, no honor of himself, to sustain, one almost inevitably looks and goes downward. The Gospel recognizes this fact. Coming to us a ministry of elevation, that it may be a ministry of redemption, one of its first offices is, to quicken us to an honor of ourselves; to make us aware who we are, and what we are; and thus to kindle us to a reverence of our nature, in a consciousness of our infinite worth in God's sight. You are God's child, and, as such, He loves you, and counts you as more precious than all the worlds He has made, it says to each one of us, no matter how lost or fallen; and its appeal is—Will you not respect in yourselves what God so much esteems, and what He has, at such a cost, appointed means to redeem?

But the popular theology reverses all this; and I charge it as one of the most serious objections against it, that it does so. Its friends, indeed, talk of the worth of the soul; but the whole tendency of the theology itself, except as it is thus counteracted, is to undervalue the soul, and to beget, not a feeling of humility, but of worthlessness. How this is done by the doctrine of Total Depravity, the discourse on that subject sufficiently showed; and the tendency of the popular doctrine of Forgiveness is in the same direction.

Do you ask, how? Consider what it tells us. It tells us that we are, in ourselves, not worth God's forgiveness, or His slightest regard; that He does not care enough for us, nor hold us as, in ourselves, of sufficient account, to grant us His favor for our own sake; and that it is only as His favor is purchased for us, and as Christ's worth and righteousness are imputed to us, that we can expect acceptance with Him. The creeds, I know, do not read exactly so; but this is the substance of the doctrine put into plain speech, and as it is finding constant expression, especially in the prayers of those who accept it:—prayers, which, without speaking for others, I must say, shock and disgust me, as they outrage the ear of God and the preciousness of souls in His sight, by such a blasphemous self-abasement, and such self-dishonoring pleas for God's recognition solely "for Christ's sake." When *such* a doctrine is fairly received into the soul, working its legitimate results, on what principle can you look for any degree of manly, or womanly, and Christian self-respect, in which the soul stands up and honors itself as a child of God,

loved of Him for its own sake? When I have drilled and schooled my child to feel that, whatever I may profess, I do not care enough for him to receive him into my presence for his own sake,—that, in himself, he is utterly offensive and worthless in my sight,—that it is only because my favor has been purchased for him, and because I impute the acts or worth of somebody else to him, that I consent to own him, or admit him into my presence, at all, shall I be surprised if that child has no respect for himself, and no filial regard for me?—or, if he is a timorous, craven, or meeching creature, that dare not look me in the face, or count himself anything, except in the shadow of another? What other result could I expect?

By no means do I say, that either of the results thus supposed shows us the type of character generally exhibited among the believers of the popular theology. We know that it is not so. I only say that the *tendency* of this doctrine of Forgiveness is in this direction, and that if the result is not produced, it is only because this tendency is counteracted, or because, for some reason, it does not assert itself. That it *exists* is sufficiently attested by the fact, that we do meet with those, the product of the popular ideas, in whose characters it undeniably appears.

But of *our* doctrine, no such influence can be alleged. Accepting and prizing Christ as the sole medium through whom forgiveness is most effectually bestowed, because he is the sole medium through whom God is perfectly revealed, and the one only quickening spirit to lead us into right relations with the Father, and

taught properly to humble ourselves in a sense of sin, and in the contrition of penitent hearts, we are still taught to feel ourselves precious to God, as His children. We can gain nothing in His sight, we are assured, by unduly abasing ourselves. What he wants is not a sneaking self-depreciation, but a loving and contrite heart; and we need hold up the merits, or approach Him behind the covert, of no substitute, to secure His acceptance. He loves us, we are taught, for our own sake; and approaching Him *through* Christ, because in the light of his instructions, and as those awakened, attracted, saved by the power of his life and cross, we need only to plead our sorrow for sin, our sense of need, our purpose of amendment, and our desire for forgiveness and help, to find our kindred acknowledged, and ourselves freely forgiven, and admitted to all the privileges of our Father's house, on the sole ground that we are His children. As a necessary consequence, therefore, not only is it the tendency of our doctrine in this particular, to draw our hearts more lovingly towards God as our Father, but to teach us the great lesson of self-respect, and to lead us, in a sense of our preciousness in His sight, to honor ourselves, and to live as those whom God counts so precious, and whom He so fondly and unalterably loves.

II. *Our* doctrine of Forgiveness may claim the Practical Superiority, *because it shows forgiveness as bestowed only upon the condition of amended character.* This point was discussed somewhat in the discourse on

Regeneration; but its importance warrants me in dwelling upon it again, in this connection. The common doctrine suspends our forgiveness solely on what Christ has done to purchase it; and we secure it—not by any thing we do, but simply by faith. Hence, the talk with which we are all familiar, as to the worthlessness of good works as a condition of forgiveness, and the prominence given by the Church to the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This was the burden of the sermon of Dr. Rice, of which I have spoken —decidedly the most immoral public utterance I ever heard. Its whole design was to show that we cannot obey God's law, and that all that we can do in this direction is utterly without value in God's sight, or as a condition of acceptance with Him; that *faith*, and not *character*, is the sole ground of our acceptance; and strange and incredible as it may sound, as I repeat it, the preacher absolutely averred, that many a man will be rejected of God, and go to hell to suffer forever, who, in respect to all the graces, and virtues, and charities, that make a good man, is every way better than many a church-member who will go to Heaven. Put simple faith into one of God's scales, we were taught, and character into the other, and character kicks the beam as good for nothing in the comparison!

And this is the teaching by which our friends, who call themselves evangelical, are undertaking to promote the cause of virtue and Christian culture in the world! They do not fail, indeed, to talk about the importance of good works, and of Christian character;

but these are important, they assure us, only as the *signs* or *consequents*,—not as the *conditions* or *precedents*, of forgiveness. This is, substantially, the statement of Dr. Rice himself. And this being the kind of teaching the Church gives on this subject, who can wonder at the practical results? Naturally, character is at a discount, and a religiousness that talks, prays, and goes to church, but does not live a Christian life, is at a premium. And faith being thus insisted upon as the sole condition of forgiveness, naturally, — in the case of a large class of minds, inevitably, the conclusion is, that however a Christian life may be enjoined as the *sign* of forgiveness, if one only believes right, he may count on being safe, no matter how far his life may be from what it ought to be. The old Antinomian theory, which affirmed that good works do not promote our salvation, nor bad works hinder it, is but this doctrine, gone to seed. Well has Dr. Channing said, "Once separate the idea of pardon from purity,—once make it an exemption from outward punishment, and not the admission of the reformed mind to favor and communion with God, and the doctrine of pardon becomes our peril, and a teaching, so teaching it, is fraught with evil:"—a fact too clear, not simply theoretically, but in the type of piety and of religious living, which has too widely dishonored Christ and the Church.

All this *our* doctrine avoids. Conditioning forgiveness wholly on penitence and amended character, it gives us to understand, that, no matter what or how much we may believe, or how punctilious we may be in forms, or how effervescent with mere emotion, we can

expect acceptance and forgiveness with God, only as faith works by love and purifies the heart, and character becomes what it ought to be. Bidding us recognize Christ as our Leader, our Helper, our Redeemer, without whom we can do nothing to most effect, it tells us that his righteousness can avail us nothing, except as we are led into a like righteousness, and that, while he intercedes for our forgiveness, it is with us that we will come to God, and love and obey, and be forgiven, and not with God, that He will be gracious, and consent to forgive us, on account of what he has done. How much more healthful, morally, the influence of *such* teachings must be than that of the common doctrine, I surely need not tarry to show.

III. This Practical Superiority may also be affirmed, *because our doctrine makes forgiveness a forgiveness of sin, and not of any deserved punishment.* This point has so frequently received our attention in these discourses, and has already been so fully set forth in this, that it will not be necessary for me to dwell upon it at any length. Suffice it for me renewedly to call your attention to the fact that, whatever encourages the idea of impunity in sin, or of an escape from the just consequences of wrong, weakens restraint, and so far as punishment serves to enforce law, renders law a dead letter, and thus demoralizes men. How the common doctrine of Forgiveness does this, is easily seen. "To show mankind that crimes are sometimes pardoned, and that punishment is not the *necessary consequence*, is to nourish the flattering hope of impunity," are among

the words of Beccaria, which Gov. Banks thought worthy to be printed in gold, to be hung in the Council Chamber of Massachusetts :—and who will dispute the declaration, as a principle? "The less certain your punishments are," says Jeremy Bentham, "the more severe they must be; the more certain your punishments are, the more you may reduce their severity. What shall we say, then, of a power expressly established to render them uncertain? I mean the power of pardoning: it has cruelty for its cause; it has cruelty for its effect." Sir Samuel Romilly was of the opinion, that, if it were possible to reduce punishment, as a consequence of crime, to absolute certainty, imprisonment for a few weeks only would prevent every criminal act, not arising from sudden and ungovernable passion.* To the same effect, the leading secular journal of New England, commenting upon Gov. Banks' address to his Council, said, "It is the *certainty*, and not the severity of punishment, which terrifies the evil-doer. *Abolish the pardoning power entirely, and the penalty for offences might be materially modified without detriment to the community.*"

This testimony—which might be multiplied to almost any extent—relates specifically to the administration of human laws. But the principle thus recognized and enforced is as sound in the domain of religious motive, as concerning the efficiency of human laws; and the common doctrine of Forgiveness works the same mischievous results, in respect to God's moral law, as is

* I quote Bentham and Romilly on the authority of Gov. Banks' address to his Council.

wrought with respect to our statute law, so far as men are encouraged to expect pardon, and thus to count the penalties enacted as things to be easily set aside. *Our* doctrine does no such thing. It certifies us that the state of things exists under the Divine economy which Sir Samuel Romilly held would be so efficient if it could be attained under human governments—viz., that "punishment as a consequence of crime is an absolute certainty." It writes before every man's eyes, and sounds continually in every man's soul, If you sin, no forgiveness can save you from the consequences. If you thrust yourself amidst the avenging agencies of God, you will be wounded, and suffer, and bleed, just as certainly as you would be crushed should you thrust yourself amidst the revolving wheels of some mighty machine. Abandoning your sin, you may, indeed, escape the punishment that a continuance in sin would insure; but there is no expedient of repentance,—no law of forgiveness,—no device of substitution, on account of which you can sin with impunity, or, having sinned, fail to eat of the fruit of your doings. And saying this, we affirm for our doctrine a practical healthfulness and efficiency, that can be affirmed of no other.

IV. Finally: This Practical Superiority is claimed for our doctrine of Forgiveness, *because it assures us that all may be and are to be forgiven.* This completes the power of our faith in this particular. The common doctrine tells us that there are those for whom there is no hope; those who are either among the non-elect, or who have so wandered and fallen that they have "sin-

ned away the day of grace;" those whom the arms of God will never reach and enfold, and for whom there is only the doom of despair and woe in reserve forever. And not to speak now of the hearts that have been agonized, or of the poor souls in whom reason has been dethroned, and who have been driven into utter madness, by the fear, or the conviction, that they were among this number for whom there is no hope—*no hope forever*, who can estimate the extent to which this doctrine has cast its baneful shadow over the world, deadening aspiration, discouraging effort, turning away souls from a God from whom there was nothing to expect, and making many a man and woman content to grovel, or to wallow, and eager to drown all moral anxieties in the excitement of the cup, or in the debasements of a sensual life? Oh, a terrible account, could we behold all the facts in this direction, should we see written against this doctrine, which so limits the forgiving grace of God, and so sets bounds to the number for whom there is hope, and to the distance that God's loving arms can reach.

The mission of *our* doctrine it is, to proclaim larger and better things of God, and to shed the inspirations of its encouraging and saving power into all souls. Going out with the message that there are none fallen or lost beyond recovery,—none who have wandered so far, or sunk so low, that God does not still see and pity them,—none whom God does not still love, or whom He is not ready to forgive,—and opening to our vision of faith, the grand results of God's moral government and of Christ's mediatorial work, and dis-

closing all, at last, brought home, reconciled and forgiven—not one lost, or missing, it imparts encouragement, assurance, and hope, even to the weakest and the most sinful; tells even those who have wandered farthest and fallen deepest, to look up and see God's hand of grace ready to help, and His arms of mercy ready to receive them; and proclaiming to all that the time is coming when they will repent, come home, and be forgiven, it says to each, Awake, O soul,—thou child of the God who never forgets nor forsakes,—thou beloved of him who died for all,—thou heir of all the glories of Immortality, awake,—arise,—come home to the Father's house, and be forgiven *now*. Why postpone the day of penitence and consecration which is sure to come?—or why delay your entrance upon the joys, without which, whatever else you may have, you are poor, and in which you are to find your felicity forever?

Blessed is the errand which this doctrine of ours, bearing such tidings of forgiveness for all, is to fulfil! Go forth, O Divine Truth, and reveal God, and quicken souls, till thy work of uniting souls to God is fully done! Believe this doctrine, O ye, who have not believed it heretofore, and rejoice in its encouragements, and be animated to new efforts towards God by its power; and let us, my friends, who accept this truth, with *such* a doctrine of Forgiveness—a doctrine assuring us that God's pardoning grace is freely bestowed,—proclaiming that it is only through penitence and a regenerate character that forgiveness can be attained,—promising no immunity from punishment,

only forgiveness of sin, and telling us of ultimate hope and forgiveness for all,—let us see to it that this benign work to which it is appointed is done in our souls; that we are quickened,—awakened to penitence and endeavor, and that, with the glory of God's great love before us, and all His helps in Christ afforded us, we are led constantly to pray—

"Forgive us for Thy mercy's sake—
Our multitude of sins forgive,
And us as Thy possession take,
And bid us to Thy glory live,—
Live in Thy sight, and gladly prove
Our faith by our obedient love."

X.

Salvation.

"I declare unto you the Gospel, . . . by which . . . ye are saved, . . . unless ye have believed in vain."—1 Cor. xv. 1, 2.

That Christ came into the world to save sinners, is the common faith of Christendom; and *Salvation* is, on all hands, conceded to be the key-note to which the whole anthem of the Gospel is pitched. But from what did Christ come to save men? How many did he come to save? And how many will he succeed in saving? In other words, what is the nature and the extent of the Salvation, of which the Gospel is the tidings and the means?

These questions have been variously answered; but, sifting the answers down to their essential principles, we find that there are, in fact, but two general replies: that which *we* give, and that which underlies all the differences of the so-called evangelical sects, making their theology substantially the same. These sects diverge, in many respects, in the details of their opinions; but getting at their radical ideas, it is seen that, in regard to this subject, they all stand on the same platform, and hold the same substantive theory of Christ's saving work. As has been foreshown in several of the discourses last given, this theory is, *that Christ came to save us from endless woe.* Dr. Adams, of Bos-

ton, in his notable argument for Endless Misery, made as part of the Discussion between him and our Rev. Brother Cobb, laid it down as one of his cardinal propositions, that—"Redemption by Christ is represented as having for its object, salvation from final perdition." Incidentally, no doubt, the idea of salvation from sin is included in this idea of salvation from final perdition; but as the doctrine is usually presented, and as it takes form in the general thought and faith, this idea of salvation from sin is almost, or quite, lost sight of, or is held as altogether subordinate to Christ's primary work of saving souls from the penalty of the Divine law, or from a future endless hell.

Hence, the fact that there are so many who think and say, that to affirm a full punishment for sin is to make it, in the words of the orthodox Dr. Hawes, "absurd to talk of men as experiencing salvation," since "*full punishment* and *free salvation* are totally inconsistent with each other." Accordingly, as you are aware, all the representations and appeals of the popular pulpit, and of private so-called evangelical conversation, are representations of our exposure to endless perdition, and appeals, pleading with us, in view of the glories of heaven, and the torments of the lost, to make sure of an interest in Christ, that we may go to heaven, and not to hell, when we die.

I read, some time ago, the report of a sermon delivered in Boston, which well illustrates the position of the Church in this respect. The text was, "The redemption of their soul is precious;" and the preacher, first drawing the picture of a conflagration,—of a moth-

er's agony, because of the peril of her child in the burning building,—of the rescue of the child, and of the applause which hails the deed, proceeded to say, that the soul is menaced by fires more fearful than ever raged on earth. Portraying the beauty and magnificence of the celestial life, he drew aside the curtain of the infernal pit, and apostrophized the presiding genius of the place. He then carried his hearers to the death-bed of the sinner—describing the cheerless blank for him beyond the grave, and his agonized shrieks for mercy. He next saw him chained in the bottomless pit, and repeated his cry for a drop of water, to cool his parched tongue. In conclusion, he admonished his hearers of impending death; of a judgment to come; that a heaven and a hell were before them, and that it was for them to choose which should be their final portion.

This sermon seems to have been highly dramatic; but it well shows how our friends are accustomed to regard and to present this whole subject:—the exposure in which they think we stand; the salvation they think we need; and the reason why, as they believe, we should esteem Christ precious, and avail ourselves of his help. Of the same character, in this respect, was a sermon I heard, last Sunday evening, from Rev. Dr. Stevens, a distinguished Methodist preacher, of this city. "What *is* this salvation?" he asked, referring to the salvation offered to us through Christ; and replying, he painted as glowing a picture as he could of the glories and attractions of

heaven as a place, leaving almost entirely out of sight —I think I might be justified in saying, leaving entirely out of sight, any saving work of Christ *in the soul itself*, and giving us to understand, that to be saved from going to hell, by getting into this beautiful place he described, is *the* salvation of which Christ would have us avail ourselves. Nor was this all. As if to make this material view of the matter still more gross, —pretending to argue the Reasonableness of Faith, he devoted a whole division of his sermon—if so it could be called — to show that it is reasonable that men should be saved by faith alone, inasmuch as only thus can those who have lived in the neglect of God and religion be saved, or can criminals, as he said, "go from the gallows to glory." To make salvation contingent on personal culture, and holiness of character, he reasoned, is to make the case of such hopeless, since there is no time for them to comply with such conditions :--assuming thus, you perceive, that salvation is something aside from this personal purification— viz., a getting away from hell into heaven, and that, therefore, *one may be saved without becoming personally holy*.

Salvation is thus made *safety*, instead of purification :—and hence we find the Presbyterian Church consistently employing this word *safety*, to indicate to its Sabbath School children its idea of salvation. One of the questions in John Brown's "Catechism for Small Children," from which I have before quoted, asks— "What is the only way of getting *safe* to heaven?"

and the answer is, "By receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, and walking in him." *

But why stop to give examples? You are entirely familiar with the fact that this is the common presentation of the subject. Nor need I say how accustomed our friends, who assume the name of evangelical, are to insist upon it, as a cardinal and essential doctrine of Christianity, that, notwithstanding all that Christ has done for this redemption of souls, there will be those—some say a large portion of our race,† others only a small portion; but at any rate some, whom he will not save, and that only a part, therefore, will get, at last, to the heaven he has purchased for those who believe on him.

To this theory of Salvation, *ours* is wholly opposed.

* Since this discourse was given, I have heard a sermon—one of the series of authoritative expositions of so-called evangelical theology in its present form, given by eminent clergymen of various denominations, to which I have several times referred in the progress of these discourses, and of which the sermon of Dr. Stevens was one — by Rev. John Cotton Smith, of the Episcopal Church, against Universalism. It was unexceptionable and Christian in spirit, but lamentable in its exhibition of ignorance, not only of Universalism, but of the essential purpose of the Gospel. Its whole argument proceeded on the assumption that Christianity is "a remedial agency," solely designed to save us from the penalty of God's law, and to get us into heaven. In no way, directly or indirectly, did the preacher recognize salvation from sin as making any part of the salvation Christ came to effect. Judging from the argument, one would not have suspected that there is such a thing as sin, from which we need to be saved.

† Rev. Henry Ward Beecher—whom some have thought almost a Universalist—says, in a late sermon, in the *Independent*, that "*more than ninety per cent* fail in their whole life, not for time alone, but for eternity!"

As was shown in our first discourse, the entire work which Christ, as our Saviour, came to do, we believe, is summed up when we say, that he came to rectify human character. We, all men, are ignorant, tempted, sinful. We do not sufficiently know God, nor reverence Him. We do not sufficiently know ourselves, even. In our weakness and our waywardness, we forget, or fail to perceive, our highest interests; and turning away from God, we choose to live according to our own wills and our own imperfect or perverted ideas, living for sense and with reference only to the perishable things of this world, instead of living on the higher plane for which God has made us. We want help, therefore: conscious of it or not, we want help, and none so much as those who are unconscious of needing it;—help to overcome what is evil in us,—help to strengthen what is good. We want a Teacher, an Example, a Guide, a Deliverer. We need to know God, and ourselves, and our Duty, and to be quickened into those affections and purposes, which, in the honor of ourselves, shall make us loyal to our Father. In few words, we need instruction in our ignorance,—strength amidst our temptations,—and salvation from our sins. Christ came to answer these needs; and everywhere, as in the text, we find Salvation presented as something already commenced in us, as believers in him, unless we have believed in vain, and something, therefore, which we experience in precise proportion to the reality and the power of our faith.

Not further to repeat what was said in our first discourse, then, *this* is the Salvation, we believe, which Christ came to effect; the only salvation which man

needs, or which Christ has power to accomplish. And *this*, we believe, he has all power to accomplish. He has not entered upon the work, we are assured, without estimating the cost, nor without having at his command all the resources which it can possibly require. He knows what is in man, and knows, therefore, how to adapt his means to the great end to be reached. And thus adapted, we affirm, his means *are* to this end. We cannot doubt it, without doubting infinite Wisdom, and infinite Power, and infinite Love. And as the result, we behold, yonder, the time when Christ shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; when *all* the ignorant shall be enlightened; when *all* the perverse shall be subdued; when *all* the sinful shall be saved; and when, in the whole universe, there shall not be one soul away from home, or out of harmony with God;—not one in darkness, or in sorrow, because transgression shall be finished, an end be made of sin, and everlasting righteousness be brought in.

This, then, in brief, is our doctrine of Salvation;—the doctrine that gives us our marked peculiarity among Christians:—a doctrine, for the justification, and in the support of which, we believe, we can confidently appeal alike to reason and the Scriptures, and to every voice which God has spoken either in nature, in our own souls, or in the undeniable character of Christ. And what, now, are the grounds on which its Practical Superiority is to be affirmed?

I. On the ground of *the intrinsic connection which it discloses between Christian faith and culture, and*

salvation. Were I to say to one of you, If you will believe on me, or pledge yourself to obey me, I will deliver you from the hands of the law, and, securing your escape from prison, will put you in possession of a beautiful estate, you would be able to see no intrinsic connection between your faith, or obedience, and the good I promised. You would only see that I had chosen, for some reason, to attach a certain arbitrary and extraneous reward to certain conditions to be fulfilled on your part—precisely as you might say to a child, If you will go home, I will give you an apple,—or, as a teacher might say to a school, Those of you who are studious shall not be shut up in the closet, but shall go out to play. And this—and *this only*, is the connection, which, according to the common doctrine of Salvation, exists between faith and the various means of Christian culture, and the salvation of our souls. As was just now said, the entire system of redemption is so represented as to wear a material aspect, as an artificial contrivance for man's escape from hell. The sum of it is, that we are in danger on account of God, and the yawning hell, yonder. We need an escape and a rescue;—and faith and prayer, a religious experience, the reading of the Bible and attendance on religious meetings are—nothing absolutely essential to the life of the soul, only so many items in the price for which we purchase this rescue, and make good our escape from perdition. They are needful—not because of what they do *in* us, but because of what they do *for* us. Were it not that there is a heaven for us to gain, and a hell for us to escape,

the idea is, there would be little or no use in attending to these things ;—we should, on the whole, find it rather pleasanter to neglect than to attend to them.

Those there are, indeed, as we all know, professing the popular faith, who take altogether higher views of religion, and the means of Christian culture, than are thus encouraged. They love to read the Bible, and to pray, for the good thus attained. They love religion for its own sake. But this is the case with such—not because of their faith, but because they have risen above, and got beyond, their faith. The mercenary and artificial uses of these things are those which their faith suggests, as the most direct and most important. Hence the fact that, taking the whole mass of Christendom together, you would find such an immense preponderance of those who "profess religion," ready to answer, should you ask them *why* they read the Bible, and pray, and devote themselves to a religious life,—not, Because we love God, and see in these things the means of getting nearer to Him,—but, Because we want to escape from hell, and purchase heaven. Hence, also, the fact that we so frequently meet with those who talk as if religion were a hardship and a penance, and who so confidently tell us, that if *they* believed Universalism—which means, that if they did not think themselves in danger of endless torment in the future world,—they would not pray, nor read the Bible, nor be religious—no, not for an hour ; but would, straightway, give themselves up to all manner of vicious indulgence, and, as they express it, "take their fill of sin." The practical effect of such a view of the religious life, and of the means of

Christian culture, must be too apparent to need remark.

Very different from all this is the effect of *our* doctrine. Showing us that Salvation is synonymous with the soul's purity, in the love of God, this shows us an essential connection between all these various means of culture and the deliverance Christ came to effect. They are no penances, arbitrarily exacted, that we may purchase salvation from hell in the future world. They are to the soul what food, and drink, and sleep, are to the body—the means by which we nurture, refresh, and strengthen ourselves in the Christian life. Faith is thus shown to be—not the price paid for so much of Christ's righteousness as is needful for our pardon, but the hand with which we take hold of that electric chain of God's truth, through which He pours into our souls the vitalizing force of His Spirit; the power by which we appropriate truth, and feed upon it as the bread of life, and become healthy and stout, as souls. Prayer is—not an enforced service, performed as a condition of God's favor, but the free and childlike communion of the soul with its Father, making it serener and holier, —as natural and spontaneous, in one who truly loves God, as is the intimacy of a child with the mother upon whose breast only it feels at home.

And so with everything pertaining to a religious life. Our doctrine of Salvation shows it as having its use—not as something artificially imposed upon us,—not, in any sense, *out* of the soul, in reference to God, or to any external rescue, or to any purchase of an extrinsic good, but *in* the soul—in that clarifying of its vision,—

in that enlargement of its affections,—in that elevation of its aims, and in that sanctification of its inmost life, in which salvation intrinsically consists. A present vital and essential purpose is thus disclosed in all these things. They are shown to be no arbitrary impositions, but indispensable helps to that work of purification which Christ proposes; and we are thus taught to be interested in them—not as in something exacted for our entrance into heaven, by-and-by, but as the means by which we are formed into Christ's likeness, and enabled, so far, to enter into heaven here. And this leads me to say,

II. In the further unfolding of this same thought, that the Practical Superiority is to be claimed for *our* doctrine of Salvation, *because of the intimate relations which it shows to exist between Christ and our present life.* As we have seen, it is, according to the common doctrine, chiefly because of the doom to which we are exposed in the Future World, that we need Christ. Were it not that we must die, and that there is a heaven and a hell on the other side of the grave, between which we must here choose, the popular representations constantly warrant us to conclude, there would have been no occasion for Christ to come, and we should have no occasion to avail ourselves of God's provisions in him. Who, listening to either of the sermons to which I referred just now, would have dreamed that there is any such thing as a curse of sin, *in itself*, to be escaped,—or a blessing of goodness *in itself*, to be sought,—or anything to move us, except the single fact that there

is a great Day of Judgment coming, when we must be sent to heaven, or hell, forever, and that, between these two, we must elect our destiny? The Future! Death and the Future! this is the constant alarm-cry of the Church, and the one grand motive by which it seeks to move the indifferent and the sinful. Because we are in danger of being lost *there*, the appeal is, *therefore*—and not because we are in darkness and in sin here, we should accept Christ, and seek an interest in his Salvation. The Future is thus made the great gulf in which are swallowed up—the grand focus in which centre, all religious thought, all significance of faith, all meaning of Christ's life and death and work, while the Present and Christ's relations to this life are wholly overlooked or forgotten. Thinking how, through what Christ has done, they may get to heaven *there*, men neglect, or count as of minor consequence, the charities, graces, and virtues, in which he would nurture them, that they may make heaven *here*.

This is one of the most mischievous practical results of the prevalent doctrine of Salvation—this, viz., that it has so thrown all the meaning of Christ's work into the Future, and so counted his present relations to us as nothing, except on account of their bearing *there*. And that I may the better enforce this point, and save myself from the suspicion of misrepresentation, let me adduce an extract from one of the most distinguished authorities of the country, as a specimen of what might be indefinitely cited from so-called evangelical writers, of all denominations. The extract is from Dr. Wayland, and is found in a discourse on "The Work of the

Messiah." He says: "The Messiah, then, came as the second Adam, to obey the law, which, in consequence of the disobedience of the first Adam, the whole race of man had broken. . . . If he passed triumphant in virtue through all the moral trials to which our nature could be exposed, a way of escape from eternal wrath was provided; the gate of heaven, before closed by our sins, was thrown wide open to every child of Adam." And, in another place:—"The race of Adam was delivered from the curse of the law, and a way, even into the Holiest of Holies, was opened to us, through the everlasting covenant."*

Now, remembering that this is the very highest "orthodox" authority in exposition of this subject, I want you to tell me what, according to this exposition of "the Messiah's Work," there was for Christ to do, except to get "the gate of heaven" in the future world open to us, by his obedience in our stead? Or, what possible reason is there for us to be interested in him, or his work, except that he has succeeded in opening this "gate" to us, and thus "provided" for us "a way of escape from eternal wrath?" No one can tell; and thus we have an unimpeachable illustration of the practical mischief to which I refer: a mischief which *our* doctrine alone obviates. Christ's work, *this* gives us to understand, relates to us *here* and *now*—and to the Future only as the Future is the continuation of the Present, and because our essential needs there will be the same as our needs here. Our being, to-day, to-morrow, next day, here, there, is *one*—subject to the same laws, and involving

* University Sermons.

the same moral necessities. Christ's work concerns us as those whose being has this unity of moral interest, and his appeal to us, we believe, always is in reference to what we *now* are, and what we *now* need. Coming to us where we stand, wherever that may be, he would commence in us that work of illumination, of purification, of enlargement, and consecration, which is ultimately to be perfected in our entire harmony with God. The Future Immortal World is doubtless to witness the consummation of this saving work;—and it is no doubt well that we should look *there*, beyond the clouds, and pains, and tears, and sins of this life, and feel ourselves gladdened and uplifted in view of our ultimate inheritance of cloudless glory and joy. But Christ's redeeming work, to be completed *there*, we affirm, is only the same work of instruction and purity, which is commenced in the believing soul *here*;—and it is well for us to look *there*, only that his present work in us may be furthered,—our souls chastened and refined, and our characters ripened towards the roundness and mellowness of heaven. We should need Christ to do *this* for us, even if there were no hereafter.

What, then, practically follows? This, clearly:—that Christ has just as much importance to us here and now as he can ever have;—that his salvation is something which we need as much to-day as we shall ever need it;—that, dreaming no dreams of a deliverance which he is to accomplish for us from a hell hereafter, we are to feel that "*now* is the accepted time, and *now* the day of salvation;"—that we need him to make us, in our places of trade, in our work-

shops, and in our homes, better men and better women —better parents and better children,—better husbands and better wives,—better citizens,—more honest and liberal in our business,—broader and tenderer in our sympathies,—more reverent of God, and more loving towards man;—and that just in proportion as this work is done, all the work which he has to do, or which he can ever do, for us, is accomplished, and we are saved.

Is it important that men and women should be led thus to feel this present significance of Christ and his work for them,—to identify his salvation with their present honesty, purity, and moral and religious fidelity,—and to understand that all that he ever proposes to do for them, he proposes to do *in* them, now, day by day? Then has *our* doctrine of Salvation immeasurably the advantage, practically, over the common doctrine. Coleridge has well remarked that "as there is a worldliness' or the *too-much of this life*, so there is *another-worldliness*, or *other-worldliness*, equally hateful and selfish with *this-worldliness*." And could we tarry to unfold, at length, the morbid religiousness, and the various results of evil, which the common doctrine of Salvation has produced, in fostering and inflaming this "*other-worldliness*," leading men and women to think little of character *here*, and almost wholly of deliverence from hell there, we should see a case made out, which would impress even the most confident Universalist among us with a sense of the worth and importance of *our* doctrine of Salvation in this respect, as we have never realized it before. But I pass to remark,

III. Presenting still but another phase of the same general thought we have thus far been unfolding, that this Practical Superiority of our doctrine of Salvation may be claimed, *because it shows salvation to be deliverance from sin, and not from punishment.* It is one of the most lamentable errors by which the glory of the Gospel has been obscured, and its power destroyed, that Christ's work has been so materialized,—so widely thought to be merely a deliverance of the soul from outward pain, instead of its emancipation from inward wrong. The true character of sin, as involving its own sure retribution, has thus been overlooked. Salvation has been referred, as we have seen, exclusively to the Future, and men and women have been led to think of religion as having claims upon their attention, because of what it is to pay by-and-by,—not because of what it intrinsically *is*, and *does* in the soul. "Ask multitudes," once said Dr. Channing, "what is the chief evil from which Christ came to save them, and they will tell you, Hell; penal fires; future punishment. Accordingly, they think that salvation is something that another has achieved, or may achieve for them, very much as a neighbor may quench a conflagration that threatens their dwellings and lives." This is true. In consequence, when what is thought to be the required price has been paid,—when men and women have been aroused to a sense of danger,—have passed through certain inward struggles,—have assented to certain doctrines, and attached themselves to the Church, taking care to be punctilious in what are called their religious duties, they feel "safe." So far as

the doctrine of endless misery, involving so many contingencies, and such fearful uncertainties, can allow any one to feel secure, they take it comfortably for granted that they have "made their peace with God," and that Christ's work for them is done. Hence the fact—of which I have before spoken, and of which we are all only too well aware—that religion has been so divorced from character and every-day life; that it has been and is so much in form, in Sunday service, and so little in Christian fruits. Do we not all know, as I have before had occasion to ask in these discourses, that a so-called evangelical profession of religion does not necessarily involve any change of character; that men and women claim to have been converted—to have obtained an interest in Christ, and an assurance of salvation, and yet remain essentially the same mean, low-toned, sordid, and sometimes dishonest persons as before? Do we not all know that persons, making a great show of piety—patterns in their own esteem and in the esteem of the Church, are often persons of narrow minds and sympathies—covetous, hard, bigoted, and that to be known as a zealous and confident religionist is not necessarily to be known as an honest, large-hearted, pure, self-denying, Christian man or woman?

These things, then, show the tendency of the common doctrine of Salvation as an exemption from punishment —show the tendency of this doctrine even when they appear among those who profess to have renounced it, because showing the type of life which it encourages, and which, as the leaven of popular thought in this

respect, it has generally produced. Let me not, indeed, be supposed to overlook the fact, that there are those who believe this doctrine, in whom a higher type of life appears—pure, unselfish, and Christian, in truth: all honor to them. Not these, however, but the first-named illustrate the legitimate influence of this doctrine, and show how inevitably, when men think of salvation from punishment as their chief concern, they forget to give due importance to salvation from sin.

Altogether different will it be when *our* doctrine of Salvation, as a salvation from meanness and from sin, shall have become diffused, accomplishing its work. In a certain remote sense, indeed,—in the sense that a physician aiming to save us from a disease, aims also to save us from the pain that attends it, this doctrine concedes that Christ came to save us from punishment. Hence the Apostle speaks of being "saved from wrath through him,"—thus employing wrath as a figure for the punishment which sin insures.

But this salvation from punishment, we allege, formed no part of the direct and primary design of Christ's mission. As has been said in former discourses, from any just punishment which God has appointed for our sins, he would not redeem us, if he could,—and could not, if he would. Such a salvation is not possible, and were it possible, would not be desirable, or merciful, since we *need* all the punishment that our sins involve. Not punishment, therefore, but ignorance and sin—especially sin, leading us away from God, and blinding and binding us in a bondage of corruption—*this* is the great enemy, the overpowering curse from which, *our*

doctrine assures us, we require deliverance. There is no wrath, no vengeance, no damnation, *we* are certified, but *this*. This is the element—the only element of hell; without which, there is no hell; with which, though Infinite Power itself should task its resources to adorn a habitation for the soul, there can be no heaven. And to emancipate men from this—to deliver us, as the apostle has said, "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God," *this* is the salvation of Christ. Of course, then, as we would get any good from the Gospel, or have any share in Christ's redeeming work, we must look *in ourselves* for the fruits of his efforts in our behalf. Everything that bears the name of Religion is thus made practical, and the measure of our salvation is made to depend upon the measure of our goodness, day by day; upon the measure of our manliness,—of our Christianized character,—of our union with God, conforming us to the pattern of Christ's life. We are saved, we are thus assured,—we *can* be saved, here or hereafter, only as these results are realized. Here or there, Christ has nothing to give or to do for us, but *this*—this simply; and our whole interest in him is thus turned to the one point of our emancipation from selfishness and sin, and to the satisfaction and moral strength we thus attain. Does it need argument, then, to show that *such* a doctrine of salvation *must* have the moral advantage over that which talks constantly of hell, and of a rescue from it, rather than of sin and of deliverance from its power?

IV. This advantage may be still further claimed for *our* doctrine, *because it makes Christ more essential and more precious to us.* Christ becomes a power in souls, just in proportion to their sense of his importance. Those who, professing to believe in him, show no regard for him, illustrate this. Why are they thus indifferent, except that they have no sense of Christ's necessity, or preciousness to them? Some of you care little, or nothing, for Christ. *Why*, except that you do not feel that he is of sufficient importance in himself, or to you, to make it worth your while to devote yourselves to him? You will be quickened to interest in him, when you are quickened to feel that he is necessary to you, and precisely *as* you are quickened to feel his necessity.

I say, then, that Christ becomes a power in souls in proportion to their sense of his importance; and our doctrine, showing him as most essential and most precious, is thus fitted to make him a power in those who believe, as no other doctrine can. He *cannot* be so much to one who thinks of him simply as an expedient to deliver men from suffering, as to one who sees that he came to save them from sin. Any one can suffer pain as the substitute of another, and so purchase his deliverance from punishment; but it is only a great soul that, through what it has lived and suffered, can send the current of a new life thrilling through souls debased in ignorance, and enslaved by sin, informing and regenerating them, so that they shall stand up and be great like itself. In proportion as the common doctrine of Salvation materializes Christ's work, therefore, it not only dishonors it, but lessens the essential worth

of Christ himself. And so, just as necessarily, whoever limits the issues of his work, to the same extent belittles him, since he cannot be as much, or so precious, to one who regards him as the Saviour only of a part, as to one who rejoices in him as the certain Saviour of the world.

It must be admitted, indeed, that there are many who *profess* to believe in our doctrine of Salvation, as well as among those who profess the common doctrine, who do not seem much affected in view of the truths thus avowed. But this is only because such do not realize what our faith is in this respect, nor perceive those vital relations which it discloses between Christ and us, as those whom he has lived and died to redeem from sin. As no other form of faith does, ours reveals Christ, not only as the gift and expression of God's love,—not only as our Example and Comforter and Friend,—but as the Power of God and the Wisdom of God for the regeneration and enlargement of souls, and as the essential and sufficient provision of Divine Grace for the satisfaction and redemption of the world. No human being can see him as he is thus presented to us, and *feel* the meaning of what he *is*, and of what he *has done*, and of what he is *to do*, as the efficient and unconquerable Helper of lost and sinful souls, who will never give up till he has brought all souls home, and fail to be awakened and attracted towards him in a love and self-consecration that says, O Lord, I cannot stay away from thee, when thou has done, and art yet to do, so much for me. And if there are those among you,—if there are those anywhere, who, professing to believe

Universalism, have not yet said this, and so illustrated what this view of Christ is fitted to do, it is because you believe with your heads and not with your hearts, —because your eyes have been withholden, so that you never yet have seen the Saviour whom you profess, and thus, because your souls have never been aroused to perceive *your* needs, or *his* meaning and claims. But,

V. Finally: Our doctrine of Salvation has the Practical Superiority, *because of the larger and more generous spirit which it cultivates, and the more earnest and hopeful labor for the reformation of the world which it encourages.* Bidding us see in *all*—without respect to color or condition, those for whom Christ lived and died, and those, therefore, who have an equal interest with us in his redemption, it rebukes narrowness and exclusiveness, and so commends the entire race to our sympathy as to make all equally the objects of our fraternal regard. Assuring us that every soul is to be saved,—that there are none so ignorant that they will not be enlightened,—that there are none so fallen that Christ's hand will not reach down and lift them up,—that there are none so sinful that they will not, at some time, be melted into contrition, and come home from their wanderings, to love God and to enjoy Him forever, it bids us see in the most ignorant and debased those who will be washed white in the blood of the Lamb, and sit with us among the redeemed. Not only does it thus forbid anything like pride, but it furnishes the motive and inspiration to the most

earnest and persevering efforts for the recovery of the sinful, and for every righteous end. It assures us that no such effort can be in vain; that whatever is done in Christ's name, or in the name of humanity, in any field of philanthropic endeavor, is so much done to overturn the empire of Satan, and to hasten the certain triumph of God's grace in His Son, and cannot be lost.

Point me, if you can, to any thing in the common doctrine of Salvation that affords us assurances like these, or that encourages or warrants such a breadth of human interest,—such a confidence in moral labor,—or such a certitude of good results from every seed of honest endeavor that a Christian hand may sow. There is no space to dwell on this topic, even were it necessary; but, fortunately, the facts are so transparent, and this fitness of our doctrine to expand and enlarge the heart, and to make us, amidst whatever discouragements, diligent in labor for human good, is so apparent, that I may safely leave the further discussion of the subject to the suggestions of your own good sense.

There are those who would regard it as preposterous, that we should claim this Practical Superiority for our doctrine of Salvation. I cannot but believe, however, that, in view of the considerations now set forth, you will agree with me in thinking this claim abundantly sustained. In respect to mere dramatic, or melo-dramatic power, indeed,—in power to appeal to the senses and to terrify the imagination through pictures of material sufferings, we make no pretence to compete with the common doctrine; but in power to

interest the affections,—in power to appeal to and quicken the conscience and the soul's sense of need,—in power to nurture an abhorrence of sin, and the desire and purpose to escape from it,—in power to make Christ precious, and the religious life attractive, and the means of Christian culture as delightful as they are essential,—in one word, in power to fill the believing soul with a vital interest in salvation, as synonymous with the love of God, the love of man, and sympathy with heaven, and thus to make religion practical as an every day necessity, and as a constant growth—in *this* power, we claim that our doctrine of Salvation is fitted to be, beyond all comparison, more effective than the common doctrine ever has been, or ever can be.

And, appealing to any to whom I speak, who do not believe this doctrine of ours, to give due weight to what has now been said, and to honor the Saviour, and do good to themselves, in the acceptance of the great truth we defend, what I want especially to do, in closing, is to press upon you who profess to be Universalists, the serious responsibilities of your position. The work, let me say, to which we—to which *you*, as Universalists, are specially called, is practically to demonstrate the justice of the claim which, in your behalf, and in behalf of the Gospel we believe, this discourse affirms. You profess to regard this claim as indisputable. There probably is not one of you, who would hesitate to say, that, in your judgment, it has now been established beyond controversy;—there is not one of you, certainly, who does not insist, in talking with your friends of another faith, that this advantage is altogether with us.

Are you *living*, as well as *talking*, to prove it? Are you showing that you not only believe in Christ as the destined Saviour of all souls, but that you love him as *your* Saviour, and that you are interested and anxious to have his redeeming work done in you? Are you seeking, by his help, and through prayer and steady effort, to grow more and more Christian, *here* and *now*, or are you simply dreaming dreams, and talking words, about his salvation hereafter?

To an extent far too small, it must be sorrowfully confessed, has this superiority of our doctrine of Salvation shown itself, hitherto, in the lives of its believers. The leaven of the old ideas and mischievous misconceptions, as to the nature of Christ's saving work, and the motives to the Christian life, has, unfortunately, too largely pervaded—as it still too largely pervades—the opinions and impressions of those professing our higher truth. Universalism has thus been seriously neutralized and hindered, in its practical expression. Of this leaven, we need utterly to purge ourselves, that, with no lingering remnant of the old conceptions of salvation as an exemption from punishment,—as a mercenary bargain, or as a material and distant thing, we may rise into the constant endeavor to realize it as a *present* and *growing* state of the soul—begun *here*, in proportion to our faith and holiness,—to be perfected in the spiritual enfranchisement of heaven. There are no words expressive enough, to tell how much there is to animate us to such endeavor, in this great doctrine of Salvation, as Universalism expounds it, or to interest us in the Saviour thus revealed; and we should not suffer our minds to

be clouded, or our lives to be perverted, by the lower and baser theorizings of the Church. What is there, indeed, that *can* enlist attention, or awaken affection, or kindle to effort, or induce to consecration, that is not furnished in *our* doctrine of Salvation? Nothing. It exhausts all the possibilities of human thought, desire, or need; and I call upon you, my brother, or sister, professing to be a Universalist, to manifest what Universalism thus is. If you have any honesty of conviction,—if you are not insulting God, and mocking all the sanctities of the Saviour's life and cross, by hollow professions, and words without meaning,—if you have any conscience or heart in talking about Universalism, or in professing to hold Christianity as a Divine religion, and would not shame what you ought to serve, I call upon you to show it in the quality of character you exhibit. You profess to believe that Christ's salvation is a deliverance from meanness, and impurity, and selfishness, and sin,—appearing in a prayerful, self-sacrificing, and holy life: Are you seeking such a salvation, by seeking to make attainments in such a life? You will not deny, that Christ calls all who believe in him to confess him before men, in a formal consecration to his service:—Have you thus confessed him, and consecrated yourself to him? You believe that he lived and died for you:—Have you knelt before him, as if he had thus given himself for you, saying, Lord, thou gavest thyself for me; henceforth, I give myself to thee? I urge these questions upon you—not as a mere professional form, but as summoning you to reflection on the most solemn interests of being; and if you have not heretofore felt as deeply,

or acted as consistently, as you ought, in respect to this subject, resolve, I entreat you, by all that makes God sacred, and Christ precious, and the Gospel worthy of your service, that you will henceforth act more nearly up to the plane of your professions, and *live as you profess to believe*. Of what worth is your doctrine of Salvation to you, if its worth does not thus appear?

And in this connection, if you have any desire to live as if you believed in the Saviour, allow me to press upon your attention the claims of the Church, as a symbol of consecration to him, and as a means of help to you. Have you ever thought what you are saying, so long as you withhold yourself from the Church? You are saying that you do not care enough for Christ, to put yourself into those relations to him which he enjoins. You are saying that there is no power in *your* faith in Christ, to quicken you to a religious purpose, or to cause you to feel that you are bought at the price of his sufferings and blood. And, saying these things, I appeal to you, are you honoring your faith, or your Saviour, as your duty requires?

Think of these things, I pray you; and if you would really have others accept the Christ of your faith, *show that you have accepted him yourself*. If you have been doing this, do it more earnestly. If you have not been doing it, here and now, as these words of mine come to you, consecrate yourself to Christ, as your personal Saviour, that his salvation may be an experience and a fact in your daily life. Then will you practically attest the preciousness and the power of that Gospel, in the light of which it is our privilege to see him as the *Saviour from sin*, and *the Saviour of all*.

XI.

The Future and its Results.

"Then cometh the End, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power: . . and when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."—1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

The question of Results under the Divine Government, involving the question of the future ultimate destiny of our race, is, on many accounts, the great question of Religion. The absolute obligations of Right, it is true, and the intrinsic desirableness and blessedness of a good life are *facts*, whatever may be true as to our destiny beyond this world. But so far as all our conceptions of God and of His relations and feelings towards us, and all our affections and feelings towards Him, are concerned,—so far as respects any appeals which Christ makes to our confidence and regard,—so far as anything and everything that enters into Religion as a motive, or as a means of its practical power, is directly or indirectly concerned, the great underlying question of questions is, Why are we in this world?—what is God's purpose with us? and what is to be the issue of His government over us?

There are those, you are aware,—possibly I am speaking to some such—who are accustomed to say,—indeed, it is the usual assertion of those who

doubt, or deny, the Great Result which we affirm—that we are not to concern ourselves with results;—that it is "none of our business" to ask how many, or how few, are to be saved;—that it is enough for us that God reigns, and that Christ has lived and died for our salvation; and that we are only to be anxious so to comply with the prescribed conditions as to secure our own safety, doing, meanwhile, what we can for the salvation of others, satisfied to leave the final issue to God. But those who thus talk entirely overlook the conditions of confidence, as well as the ineradicable necessities of our moral and sympathetic nature. I cannot place the fullest confidence in one of you as a workman, or as a friend, until I have seen some of your finished work, or have had reason to be assured that, come what may, you will never cease to be my friend. As little can we intelligently judge concerning the character of God, or His government, except as we see what are to be the results in which He will rest. We cannot know whether to trust Him, or not; cannot tell how to regard the experiences of Time, or in what spirit to anticipate the possibilities of Eternity. Concerning all these things, we are utterly in the dark, except as we see the end in which God will rest, and light and assurance are thus furnished us. The same thing is true concerning Christ. I am not prepared to give him my fullest faith as the Saviour I need, and that the world needs, until I know whether, or not, he is to prove competent for the work he has undertaken, and see distinctly what are to be the results of his mediatorial endeavors.

Equally is a knowledge of results essential to our own satisfaction. A cold and selfish nature, that never thinks beyond the horizon of its own interests and safety, may be content to know, or to feel, that *its* immortal welfare is secure, satisfied if it can take a comfortable hold upon the thought of heaven, and say, *I* am safe, at any rate. But an inquisitive and sympathetic soul, that thinks of others as well as of itself, —that, amidst the mysteries of evil, and the shadows of sorrow, and the curse of sin, cannot help asking, What do these things mean, and are they ever to end? —that, amidst the differences of character and the separations of death, is impelled to inquire, How is it to be *ultimately* with my loved, and with my race?— *such* a soul cannot be satisfied until, overleaping all intermediate conditions, it sees the end—and sees it to be an end of good. Nor is it a mere idle curiosity that exacts such a foresight of results. It is the self-assertion of all that is best and broadest in us. It comes of absolute moral laws, by virtue of which, in proportion to the largeness and tenderness of our sympathies, we include the welfare of others with our own, and demand the assurance of their good as the condition of highest peace for ourselves. Any other spirit is utterly selfish; and, whatever creeds may say, none but one given up to the grossest selfishness can really be indifferent to the issues of God's government, or be content to know nothing and care nothing about them, if but complacently assured of his or her own safety.

Very widely, then, do they err, who tell us that Re-

sults are none of our concern ; and in view of what has thus been said, to go no further, we see how fundamental this question of Results is in every system of religious thought, and how vital, therefore, must be the relations of the doctrine of the Future which one may entertain, to every other doctrine he holds, and not less, to his own satisfaction and peace. As the English churchman, Chauncey Hare Townsend, has truly said,

> "Give evil but an end—and all is clear!
> Make it eternal—all things are obscured!
> And all that we have thought, felt, wept, endured,
> Worthless. We feel that even if our own tear
> Were wiped away forever, no true cheer
> Could to our yearning bosoms be secured,
> While we believed that sorrow clung uncured
> To any being that we on earth held dear.
> Oh, much doth life the sweet solution want
> Of all made blest in far futurity!
> Heaven needs it too."

Some doctrine of the Future, and of the results into which the present order of things is at last to settle, is found, go where we will. Crude and gross enough are some of the ideas which are, or have been, thus entertained ; but the voice that comes even from the crudest and the grossest of them is, that it is an instinct of our nature to look forward to Immortality, and to theorize concerning the end in which the universe is to ultimate. Christianity, we believe, is the Divine Interpretation of the Future, answering the questions which had never been surely answered before, and giving us God's own solution of this momentous problem as to the final des-

tiny of our race. So all Christians are agreed in regarding it. But what *is* the Future thus revealed? And what *are* the results in which, we are thus assured, God will rest?

I will spend no time in speaking of the minor differences, which have prevailed among Christians on these points. Nor will I devote any space to the speculations and beliefs in reference to this subject, at present so prevalent among a certain class of minds under the name of Spiritualism. Were there time and space, I would be glad to say some things in this connection, on this latter point, and since we are to speak of the practical influence of different doctrines of the Future, to indicate what seem to me some of the practical objections to the opinions and habits of thought thus referred to. There is, however, now no room for this, and I must content myself with saying that there are *three* general theories of the Future, and of the ultimate results of the Divine administration.

The first, and the most general, is that which claims the special title of evangelical, and which describes the Future as but an endless continuance of the moral conditions here existing,—of the character here formed,—and of the rewards, or punishments, here deserved. *This* is a state of probation, we are told;—*that* is a state of retribution. God's immortal empire is pictured as divided into two great realms—Heaven and Hell; and this being said, you have no need that I should dwell on the details of the picture. You are familiar with the representations of the Great Day of Judg-

ment;—of the stern and pitiless Judge;—of the two companies into which the race shall be separated;—of the world of light and joy, to which the good shall attain; and of the world of darkness and of unutterable woe, to which the impenitent shall be hopelessly consigned. It is this world of endless darkness and torment, that gives chief character to the Future, as this doctrine discloses it — just as it is the bed of agony upon which some poor sufferer is tossing, that gives, and *must* give, chief character to a chamber, however elegant may be its adornments, or however there may be those in some portion of it, laughing and singing, in heartless indifference to the sufferer, or in happy unconsciousness of his pain.

Very much modified, it must be confessed, the doctrine is, in these days, in its descriptions of this realm of woe. Formerly, the great mass were thought to be destined thither; the road to Heaven was described as having only

"—here and there a traveller,"

and language and imagery were exhausted to represent the lost as "roasting" in material fires, and as suffering amidst all the variety of tortures which an infinite ingenuity could invent.* Latterly, we are being told that the population of this world of terrors will bear only about the same proportion to the number of the blessed in heaven, as the number of convicts in our jails and penitentiaries bears to those out of prison, and that the torments will be but the moral conse-

* Let those curious on this point examine a little work, by Rev. Dr. Sawyer, entitled "*Endless Punishment.*"

quences of sin—remorse, despair, and the sway of an uncontrolled selfishness. But despite these modifications of the doctrine, there Hell remains, we are still assured—black with inconceivable horrors; peopled with devils and countless hosts of the spirits of mortals damned; vocal with groans and blasphemies; an inexpugnable blot upon the face of an otherwise beautiful universe; darkening the skies of eternity with its smoke, continually ascending; full, according to Albert Barnes, of "the elements of universal misrule;" and interminably mingling its horrible discords with the songs of the redeemed:—and, as we have seen in a former discourse, God's business in respect to it, if we may believe Mr. Barnes, will be, "to preserve the terrible powers in unrestrained being, and to press them into the same mighty prison-house, . . to secure eternal misery,"—or, as Dr. Adams assures us, to stir up the lost by His "excitation," that He may prevent them from lapsing into torpidity, and keep them quick to agony forever!

The second theory of the Future, to which I referred, is a reaction from the moral enormity of this prevalent doctrine. It asserts either the immediate, or the ultimate, annihilation of the wicked, and thus, by implying either that God has been disappointed, or that He has made souls, simply that they might dishonor Him, and that He might destroy them, it seeks to wipe out the blot of evil, and escape the endless perpetuity of sin and woe.

The third of the three theories mentioned is *our* doctrine of the Future. Upon some points, it is but due

to the truth to say, Universalists differ,—on some questions, broadly and materially differ, in respect to their theory of the Future; but these differences pertain to means and conditions, and not to the most fundamental principles, or final results. Notwithstanding these differences, therefore, it is proper to speak of *our* doctrine of the Future, since, however we may disagree in our philosophy as to *means*, the *end* is the same to us all. God has a purpose, we say, in the existence of our race—a purpose of mercy in reference to *all*, and His government is, in respect to each soul He has made, a government alike of inexorable law and of tender and Fatherly love and care. Beyond all present darkness, and sorrow, and trial, and sin, therefore,—beyond all the mystery that now harasses or perplexes us, we see the end for which God has made us, and in which His purpose shall be realized, and the equity and goodness of His government be effectually justified:—the Holiness and Happiness of All Souls. As through the darkest night, we never doubt that, in due time, the morning will dawn, and that the sun will again illumine the world with his meridian light,—as amidst the ravings of the severest tempest, however thick the clouds, or however wild and fierce the peltings of the storm, we know that there will come a calm, though we cannot tell when, so, amidst all the vicissitudes and conflicting good and evil of this world, however Truth may be trampled, or Right postponed, or evil seem to triumph, we are assured that these are but temporary conditions in the progress of God's moral economy, and that there will come a time when the conflict will be over,

and only Good prevail. We say with an old poet, that

> "the man
> Who could surround the sum of things, and spy
> The heart of God, and secrets of His empire,
> Would speak but Love; with him, the bright result
> Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
> And make one thing of all Theology."

To us, as was intimated in the discourse on God, all theology is but this one thing—the science of God's comprehensive and ever-operative Love:—a Love that has the universe for its theatre, and alike Time and Eternity for the hour of its duration,—ordaining the Present as the school of its discipline, and intending the Future as the field of its triumphs and complete vindication. Looking forward to the end, therefore, *we* see a Future without a cloud and without a stain: a time when, as the text assures us, all that is opposed to God shall be subdued into harmony with Him;—when Christ's work shall be fully done;—when all souls shall have been brought home to the Father;—when there shall be no more sorrow and no more sin;—when God shall be all in all, and the universe be but one vast empire of Light and Love, of Holiness and Joy forever!

Here, then, we have the three theories, between which the faith, not only of Christendom, but of the world, concerning the Future, is divided. Their contrast is apparent. I enter now into no effort to exhibit the various points of this contrast, or to show that our doctrine is the most rational, the most scriptu-

ral, or the most in accordance with every just idea of God, and every noblest sympathy and best desire of the human heart. Leaving these points — the more willingly because they are so obvious—our work now is simply with the Practical Superiority of this Universalist doctrine. We affirm this on several grounds:

I. We claim it, *because of the higher spirituality of the doctrine.* There is, unquestionably, among all sects of Christians, more or less of a recognition of the spiritual conditions of the highest good; but, as was substantially said in our last discourse, the fault—and one of the capital faults—of the common theory of the Future, as it is usually presented and received, is, that it so localizes and materializes heaven and hell, and, especially, so materializes the conceptions of Salvation, that people are led to think of *place*, rather than of *state*, as the thing to be desired. Heaven is a beautiful and glorious *place*—all the current methods of presenting the subject represent,—a place, floored with gold, walled with precious stones, radiant in all imaginable and unimaginable splendors and adornments,—a place, a mere residence in which is happiness, and into which, above all things else, it is desirable for us to secure admittance:—Hell, too, is a *place*, gloomy and horrible, full of chambers of torture and of all the elements of agony, to be in which is, necessarily, to be miserable, and from which, above all things else, it is most our concern to escape. On the brink of this local hell, we are told, we all stand by nature, held back only by the brittle thread of life, which may, at any moment, break, precipitating

us into the depths below;—and the appeal is, that we will secure such an interest in Christ as will—not amend our character, as the thing of first and greatest moment, but save us from being consigned to this hopeless abyss, and make certain our admission into the place so much safer and more glorious.

The effect of this inevitably is, to beget an oversight of the spiritual laws and intrinsic necessities of character, on which happiness and misery really depend, and to educate people to think more of *hell* than of *sin*, as the thing to be escaped,—and more of *heaven* than of *holiness*, as the thing to be attained. Hence, the divorce, so widely made in the popular opinion, between character and blessedness, or misery; and hence, also, the fact that so many have thought themselves secure of heaven, while practically regardless of all the conditions upon which heaven depends.

Our doctrine aims, and is fitted, to promote quite another state of things. The Future, as this presents it, is a realm in which nothing is to be enjoyed, or suffered, because of locality. There is no heaven, we are told, bare entrance into which, we should desire as, of itself, insuring our felicity. There is no hell, which, of itself, could make us miserable, and which we should think it necessary simply *as a place* to escape. The seat alike of heaven and hell is *within ourselves.*

> "The soul in its own state, and for itself,
> Can make a heaven of hell,—a hell of heaven."

Going from one place to another, in this world—though from the most lowly, or uninviting, to the

most beautiful, we carry our hell, or heaven,—the elements of our bliss, or woe, in ourselves.

> "If solid happiness we prize,
> Within our breasts the jewel lies—
> Nor need we roam abroad;
> From pious hearts our joys must flow—
> Hearts that delight in God."

And what is true here and now, is true everywhere, and always. Going from this world to any other,—no matter how glorious, we carry our heaven or hell with us, and shall find neither heaven nor hell, whatever the place into which we may be introduced, except *that*, the elements of which we take along with us, and *in* us. Heaven is a place, no doubt,—and we can well conceive that, of all places in the universe, it is the most fair and the most glorious; but *simply as a place*, we are given to understand, it possesses no power more than any other beautiful place to confer happiness. It is no heaven except as it is the abode of holiness.

It is thus of holiness as the *heavenly condition*, rather than of any *heavenly place*, that we are instructed to think. So far, therefore, as one really believes *our* doctrine of the Future, or at all heeds its representations, he or she is admonished to avoid sin as hell,—the only hell we have anywhere to fear, and to seek harmony and union with God as heaven,—in essence, the only heaven we can ever enjoy. Hence, we claim the practical advantage in this particular; not because there are not intelligent and

thoughtful Christians of all sects, who believe just as much as we in the essentially spiritual conditions of the Heavenly Life, but because our doctrine more clearly preserves and enforces these conditions, and thus avoids the materializing effect of the common appeals and representations — making holiness and heaven, and sin and hell, more absolutely synonymous terms. But,

II. Our doctrine of the Future has this practical advantage, *because it more effectually wins the heart to love and trust in God.* This is a ground of advantage, let me say, that means a great deal. The love of God and reconciliation to Him are the two conditions of the soul—if it is proper to speak of them as two, when they are substantially one—which it is the great design of the Gospel to secure, as the essential pre-requisites of redemption. The first great command is—not that we shall *obey* God, but that we shall love Him with all our soul and strength,—implying, that, if this primary requirement be complied with, all else pertaining to a godly life will be sure to follow. So, you remember, the comprehensive message of the Gospel is declared by the apostle to be, "*Be ye reconciled to God*,"—giving us to understand that, if this admonition be fully obeyed, all that the Gospel means by salvation from sin will be accomplished.

But it is the weakness of the common doctrine of the Future, that it is so lacking in means to awaken the heart to such a love and reconciliation. As has sufficiently appeared in the progress of these discourses,

it shows us nothing—absolutely nothing—in God, that appeals to our best and noblest affections, or that can draw them towards Him as the *common* Father, Friend, and Benefactor of our race. Its essence is partiality. Its whole design, so far as we are concerned, is a design to awaken us to a desire and purpose to be among the objects, and to secure the advantages, of God's *favoritism*. Every appeal it makes is an appeal to our selfishness; every reason it offers why we should love God is a reason founded, not in what God *is*, but in what we may thus gain above our fellows; and the grand motive upon which it relies, and in which resides all its power, is, that, by pursuing a certain course, we shall entitle ourselves to a felicity from which a portion of our race is always to be excluded. So far as we can be utterly selfish, and find enough in God to satisfy us, if He is only *our* Friend, we may be able to say that we love Him, and are reconciled to His will. But so far as we catch any measure of the spirit of Christ, and our sympathies embrace others, or we are at all awakened to an interest in the welfare of *our race*, in a consciousness of their exposures and needs, we look in vain to God, as revealed in this doctrine, for encouragement, or for any ground of hope or trust; and as we realize that He has created all, subject to these exposures and needs, fully knowing that the existence of the lost would prove a curse to them, and as we consider the Future of unspeakable and unmitigated despair reserved for them, and the display which God will make of Himself in His relations to them, as their Enemy and

Tormentor, it cannot be but that, if we have any conscience, or any sense of the moral fitness of things, we shall find ourselves repelled from Him—if not in absolute rebellion, certainly in abhorrence and disgust.

Think of the subject, I pray you. It matters not, so far as this point is concerned, as I have before intimated, whether it is the doctrine of endless misery, or the doctrine of destructionism, that is believed. Take either, and then ask yourselves what there is in a Future, darkened by mysteries of pain and sin, which shall never be solved,—in a Future, that shows God as unable or unwilling to educate and bring home all His children, and as continuing the existence of myriads only that they may blaspheme Him, and that He may torment them, or as, after tormenting them for a season, blotting them out of existence,—ask yourselves, I say, what there is in *such* a Future to awaken confidence in God, or to encourage the heart to love and trust in Him. Think of this question, seriously, as you would think of the dealings of an earthly parent with his children, and you will begin to understand, not only the practical inefficiency, but the practical mischievousness and immorality of any but the doctrine of Universalism in this respect.

It is only as we see the Future as this doctrine of *ours* reveals it—illumined by an impartial and comprehensive love,—rich in results to vindicate God, and to show how, through all possible circumstances, complications, and exigencies, He has been caring for His children, designing their welfare,

> "From seeming evil still educing good,
> And better thence again, and better still,
> In infinite progression,"—

it is only as we see, in the light of the grand issues in which He will rest, that in them all mysteries are to be solved,—all darkness dissipated,—all harsh or unkind appearances explained,—all questions that perplex and oppress us now, fully and satisfactorily answered,—it is only as *this* is the case, that we can feel our hearts stirred in their deepest depths to reverence and love God, or that we can be inclined to look up to Him, in the fullness of a child-like love and trust, and say, as we throw ourselves unreservedly on his bosom, Father, we know that Thou are great, and good, and wise,—that what we cannot see now, Thou wilt enable us to see by-and-by,—that what is evil now, Thou wilt overrule for good,—that what is dark now, Thou wilt make all bright, at last: therefore, Thou shalt be our confidence; therefore, we will love Thee with our whole hearts; and henceforth, we surrender ourselves wholly to the guidance of Thy unerring and beneficent will.

Considering, then, how much the love of God and such a reconciliation to Him are, in the work that Christianity proposes, did I not say truly that there is a great deal of meaning in the practical advantage of our doctrine in this particular? As compared with a father of uncertain kindness and constancy, how differently a child must feel towards one in whom it sees everything to love, and no occasion to fear, or to doubt! And on the same principle, how different a thing life

must be to one, who is able to interpret it as illuminated and glorified by such a faith as this of ours, compared with one who sees it through the common doctrine of the Future! How much more efficient the reasons thus furnished for an implicit trust, beneath whatever clouds,—amidst whatever darkness of pain, or sorrow, or sickness, or sin! How much deeper the sense of obligation thus begotten and fostered! And how much more numerous and weighty the motives supplied, to kindle our affections, to attract us to duty, and to consecrate us to it! Of this, however, more by-and-by.

III. *Our* doctrine of the Future has the practical advantage, *because of the more beautiful prospect which it opens, and the purer associations and companionships to which it thus accustoms us.* I have before referred in these discourses, to the power of our associations. We are in no moral sense, I imagine, necessarily the creatures of our circumstances. Circumstances are our opportunities, rather than our masters. Nevertheless, we all know that our associations *do* affect and help to educate and modify us. Even geographical position is to be reckoned among the agencies by which character is formed. One born and bred amidst the sublimities of the mountains, or where the more rugged aspects of nature constantly appeal to him, is likely to differ materially from one bred amidst softer and fairer surroundings. Different sides of our being are appealed to, and altogether different emotions are awakened within us, amidst the calm of a summer evening, and amidst the fury of a winter storm; amidst the

suggestions of a splendid sunset, when the whole west is a sea of glory,

> "And we can almost think we gaze
> Through golden vistas into heaven,"

and in presence of some wild or barren scene,—as the black clouds of a tempest roll themselves up the sky,—or as we stand upon the beach, and hear the tramp of the thunderous waves, and see the angry ocean as it foams in its rage, and fiercely flings itself against the rocks. So, it is but common-place to say, walking through a picture-gallery, or a chamber of sculpture, we are very differently affected by refined and pleasant representations, appealing to our sense of the beautiful, and ministering to all that is most chaste and elevated in our tastes and character, and by pictures of serpents and devils, and of cruel deeds or frenzied and malignant passions.

These are things entirely familiar to you; and I refer to them only to ask, What, according to the law thus illustrated, must be the moral effect of such representations as the common doctrine of the Future presses upon our thought?—representations which familiarize the mind and heart with the most horrible contemplations; which show God as deliberately tormenting a portion of His creatures, and as keeping them alive only to torment them; which tell us of sin, from which there is no redemption,—of despair, that can know no hope,—of storms, to which there can come no calm,—of tortures and distress, from which there can be no rest, no relief, to which there can come no end;—of fiends and

devils, ever raging in their blasphemies, and ever busy in their aggravation of the anguish of the damned,—and of darkness, disputing the sway of light, and proclaiming either God's weakness, or His cruelty, for ever and ever! Can you believe—can any one believe, that *such* representations, and the associations and subjects of thought which they supply, are favorable to character? Let me give you one more quotation from the Presbyterian "Short Catechism for Young Children," as a sample upon this point:—"*Q.* What will become of the wicked . . . ? *A.* They will be cast, soul and body, into hell-fire . . . *Q.* What kind of a place is hell? *A.* A place of endless torment; being a lake that burns with fire and brimstone . . . *Q.* Who are wicked men's companions in hell? *A.* Their father, the devil, and all the other evil angels. . . . *Q.* What will the wicked forever do in hell? *A.* They will roar, curse, and blaspheme God." Do you think this fit language to put upon the lips of children, or can you say that, in your judgment, the thoughts and associations thus suggested are likely to refine and elevate any one, child or adult, familiar with them? And yet, this is the kind of religious instruction which the Presbyterian Church is giving its children every Sabbath! Nor need I quote Pollok's familiar description of hell, nor cite authorities of any kind, to show that these are the pictures with which the prevailing faith feeds the imagination of its believers, and the topics of meditation which it supplies to color all their reflections upon the Future.

True, the Church tells us not only of a hell, but of

a heaven, and the thoughts, we shall doubtless be told, to which it would most accustom us, are the thoughts of God, and Christ, and angels, and the blessed hosts of the redeemed. Grant all this, and grant that some, no doubt, may be able to think of these—and of these only; but most persons, believing in a hell, and thus assured that the Future is to be blackened by its smoke, and to echo with its cursings and groans, forever, will be unable to avoid thinking of these things—and between their eyes, and God, and Christ, and heaven, its darkness will constantly, more or less, obtrude. Mingling with the joys of the redeemed, they cannot fail, at times, to hear the shrieks of the lost; thinking of angels, they will be compelled to think also of fiends; and reflecting on what God will do for the saved, they cannot help thinking in contrast of His work in reference to the damned, as he will employ the energies of His infinite power to minister to their torture, tearing open their wounds, and keeping always fresh, the springs of their interminable and ever-deepening woe.

What, then, I ask again, especially upon a certain class of minds, must be the moral effect of such associations? Nay, what, to a wide extent, has been their effect, if the records of religious history do not lie? Even Dr. Adams, in his argument for endless misery, is obliged to confess that "the contemplation of future misery, apart from the Cross of Christ," is "*hurtful to the mind and heart.*" This is only saying that "the contemplation of hell, of itself, is debasing," and that the moral influence of a familiarity with such a place of torment is injurious in the extreme. No intelligent

or candid believer of the common doctrine will hesitate to make a similar admission. Moral sensibility is thus blunted. Tastes and judgment are perverted. Sympathies are hopelessly wounded, or deadened. Suffering comes to be contemplated with indifference, and the whole character is colored and moulded, more or less, after the pattern of a vindictive God, if not after the pattern of the fiends that are scarcely worse than He. As I have before had occasion to ask, Who but those accustomed to dwell amidst the associations thus supplied, could have invented or presided over the horrors of the Inquisition, or have waged those cruelties of persecution, which so stain the page of Christian history? or, who can wonder that, formed under the influence of associations like these, there should have been such types of character in this respect as alike the church and the world have exhibited?

But, turning now to the moral influence of *our* doctrine of the Future, how broad the contrast furnished in the scenes which *this* unfolds! Here is nothing, the contemplation of which can be alleged, even by the most prejudiced, to be "hurtful to the mind or heart." Here are only thoughts and pictures upon which the imagination may delight to dwell; thoughts and pictures of God and the Saviour;—of purity, and happiness, and progress in good;—of angels and of souls redeemed, or of souls advancing towards redemption;—of light without darkness,—of joy without pain,—of a universe without a sorrow or a sin;—thoughts and pictures, which, as they are dwelt upon, and as we walk and live among them, in an increasing familiarity with

them, chasten, refine, and uplift the soul, educating it into a broader, purer, and more heavenly life.

IV. This doctrine of ours has the practical advantage, *because it so rebukes all artificial distinctions, and so nurtures faith in man, and respect for him, even in his lowest and feeblest conditions.* Like every other doctrine of the Gospel, the doctrine of Immortality is chiefly valuable as a moral inspiration — a practical force. It is grand as a thought. It is sweet and precious as a consolation. You, who have seen your children, or your beautiful or cherished ones die,—you who have looked on dear faces cold in the sleep that knows no waking, and felt in your hearts the vacancy of bereavement, and mourned the light of your homes gone out,—you can tell how much this doctrine is worth as a comforter, as, through your tears, you have looked on to the fadeless life, and found yourselves soothed into peace by the thought of your departed as living and waiting to welcome you there. But, after all, it is as a practical power that the doctrine has its highest worth. It is much that it opens such fields of speculation for the curious and inquisitive mind, and feeds the imagination with such visions of possible beatitude and glory. It is much that it so dissipates the shadows of the tomb, standing by deathbeds to put the torch of faith into the hands of the departing, and gladdening bereaved hearts as it causes the graves of our beloved to blossom with the flowers of an endless life. But it is far more that it so comes to us to explain the meaning of this life; to invest us

with the dignity of immortal beings; to make us conscious of the imperishable relations in which we stand, — of the sublime destiny for which we have been created,—and of our infinite preciousness in ourselves and in God's sight; and thus to teach us how entirely beneath us is any other than a life lived in conversation with God and heaven.

It is only as we thus see the Present as the foreground of an endless perspective, that we can appreciate its grandeur, or the significance of these fleeting hours. Consider this world simply as a place where bubbles of being float for a while, and then burst, to disappear forever, and, with all that contributes to clothe it in beauty, and to enrich it with the splendor and impressiveness of its material meanings, it is a thing of little consequence;—consider it as the birth-place of immortal souls, as the primary school into which God puts His children for a while, in the process of their education, and from which they graduate into the higher seminaries of being He has prepared for them, and even were it less in itself than it is, with what an unspeakable importance it at once becomes clothed! Consider this life as but the thing of a day it is, in its mere physical relations, and what a breath, what a shadow it is!—consider it as the dawning of an endless day,—as the commencement of an illimitable career of being, that is to stretch on parallel with the life of God, and how it straightway becomes a thing of infinite concern!

So, only in the light of Immortality can we properly understand ourselves, or others, in the meaning or

worth of our spiritual being; and *our* doctrine of the Future, essential to make Immortality grandest as a truth, alone makes us most to ourselves, or to each other. Let it be thankfully confessed, indeed, that all human interests and relations—life, society, and law, have felt the touch of a transforming power, since the resurrection and ascension of Christ; and that we are doubtless to see, in the doctrine of a Future Life, as thus demonstrated, corrupted and materialized though it has been, one of the most efficient elements of this transforming power. Men have estimated themselves by new standards. Penetrated by some assurance, they have caught the inspiration, of a nobler destiny. Milman pronounces this doctrine of Immortality, as thus confirmed and established, "the parent of all which is purifying, ennobling, unselfish in Christian civilization; as a principle of every humanizing virtue which philosophy must ever want, — of self-sacrifice, to which the patriotism of antiquity shrinks into a narrow and national feeling; and as introducing a doctrine of equality, as sublime as it is without danger to the necessary gradations which must exist in human society."*

This is unquestionably true. But it is not true to the extent, nor with the emphasis, it would have been, had *our* doctrine of the Future kindled, enlarged, and lifted men by its power. A soul living in this world only to dishonor itself, and then to be blotted out of existence, or to survive only to be the companion of devils and the sport of God's tormenting agencies—

* History of Christianity, p. 146.

a castaway forever, is one kind of being ;—a soul made in God's image, and destined, by His help, to rise out of all temporary debasement, superior to all that would drag it down—living to prove its kindred with God, and to serve, enjoy, and glorify Him forever, is another and very different being ;—and it is one of the most serious objections to the doctrine of endless misery, —to the doctrine of a partial salvation in any form, that it so qualifies, limits, and hinders the power of the doctrine of Immortality, by alleging that there are unreckoned hosts of souls of the former description. The necessary effect of such teaching, practically, is manifest. Not only does it represent God as making eternal distinctions among mankind—thus justifying prejudices, partialities, and distinctions here, but it detracts from the dignity, and lessens the worth of souls, by assuring us that there are those for whom no good can be anticipated, and who, worthless in themselves, and in the sight of God, deserve neither our faith, our sympathy, nor our respect. Alas! who can estimate the mischievous consequences that have flowed from this cause — fatally degrading some in their own estimation, and fostering presumption, pride, and contempt, in multitudes of others? If any are to be hopelessly lost, all become less precious, and are implicated in the degradation ; and to admit that any are to be dishonored and despised of God hereafter, is to justify those who think themselves more fortunate, in despising them here.

Our doctrine avoids all this. Assuring us that all were alike made in the image of God at first, it assures

us that all are still held as equally precious in His essential regards;—that not only does He love all alike now, but that all are surely destined, through the same process of redemption, to attain to the same end of glory and felicity, at last. We are thus summoned, as none others are, to a common love and honor for all who wear the human form—if not for what they are in character, certainly for what they are in latent possibilities, and in the exalted destiny appointed them. There is no soul so base, we are told, that it shall not become a companion of God;—no soul so feeble that it shall not become vigorous in immortal powers;—no soul so poor that it shall not become rich in all the wealth of heaven.

What must be the effect of such teachings, as compared with that of any doctrine of a limited redemption, it can safely be left to the candor of any thoughtful Christian mind, to say. When, tell me, does a mean act or thought look so mean, as when held up in the light of *our* doctrine of Immortality? When do the petty jealousies and class distinctions which divide us, the vanity and pride of men, appear so petty and so contemptible, as when considered in connection with the truth that we are all equally the children of God, destined to a like inheritance of immortal glory? Slavery, Aristocracy, Intemperance, War,—when do these and all social evils seem so utterly inexcusable and atrocious, as when this truth shows us what they are? Virtue, generosity, affection, and all the graces and excellences of personal character—when do these wear such a meaning, as when we see them to be buds

of flowers, the germs of which are in *all* souls, and which, unfolding in all, are to bloom imperishably, filling eternity with their fragrance? Or, when do sin and all that is mean and ignoble in personal life, seem so ignoble, so utterly base and unworthy, as when regarded in the light of Universalism—as the voluntary debasement of an immortal and glorious nature, the self-degradation of a soul that is yet to prove its kindred with God, as it finds its felicity in His service? As it necessarily detracts from our sense of the worth and dignity of souls, to think that any are to be blotted out of existence, or to be thrust away from God in endless sin and shame,—so it necessarily exalts our sense of their equality, dignity, and worth, to feel that all are so constituted in themselves, and so inestimable in God's sight, that none can wander always from Him, or fail to realize the grandeur of their possibilities in a destiny of immortal holiness and joy. Hence, it is only as we survey the world in the light of our doctrine of the Future, and take every soul in the arms of our faith, as a child of God, destined, through whatever temporary conditions of degradation or sin, to live with Him forever, and so behold our race regenerate and glorified at last, that the glory of Immortality is fulfilled, or that we can realize the claims of man as man upon our regard, or feel how persistent should be our faith in him, and our effort in his behalf.

V. Finally: Our doctrine of the Future has the practical advantage, *because of its consoling, satisfying.*

and encouraging power. Christ offers himself to us as a Comforter." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden," he says, "and I will give you rest." He promises to satisfy us. "He that cometh to me," he assures us, "shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Gospel work is to be done, in obedience to his injunction, to "seek and save the lost;" and in the nature of the case, it will be earnestly and continuously done in proportion to the assurance that it shall be availing. But where, save in the Universalist doctrine of the Future, and the results thus revealed, can the longing and heavy-laden soul find itself satisfied with this promised rest? Or, from what other source can the warrant be derived, that no work done for Christ and the lost shall be unavailing?

Go, take up some oppressive burden, that God appoints you to carry; walk beneath some great cloud that darkens and saddens your life; stand beside your dead, and give your last kiss to the face that has been as a sun to your heart:—and what is it that you require to give you strength, and peace, and an answer to your needs? Not the word that God *may* be dealing with you in mercy; not the message that *perhaps* your departed one is safe in His hands, and *may* be found of you again. You want to hear *certainly* that God is your Friend, and that your loved one is not lost—only "gone before." But away from Universalism, where can you find any such assurance? The love of God, so far as any individual is concerned, is made by all narrower creeds a matter of debate;

and, in whatever other respects they may differ, they all unite in proclaiming it as among the certainties of the universe, that there are to be perpetual separations, and that "heaven is to be full of broken families." And oh, how many of the afflicted and the sorrowing, having only these narrower creeds, have groaned and doubted, staggering beneath their burdens,—perplexed amidst their darkness, querying whether God were *their* Friend! "Oh," once said a bereaved mother to me, shedding her tears above the grave of a darling child, "Oh, that I could believe as you do, or look so confidently forward to results in eternity! My heart is not *now* at rest; but *then* I should be entirely satisfied." And how many there are, believing the common doctrine of the Future, from whose bleeding and thirsting souls such moans are ever coming! Oh, what multitudes of the bereaved have wrung their hands in suspense, or speechless agony, above their dead, haunted by the question, *Are they safe?*—and willing to give worlds, if they had them, could they but hear some voice from out the horrible silence, answering them, Yes! Oh, how many have walked the earth in the gloom of perpetual despair, or sunk into idiocy, or madness, as they have been unable to shake off the conviction that their beloved were in hell! And were it not that the instinctive faith of the heart is stronger than the speculative faith of the head, we should see more such sights, and hear wails of agony above the dying, and cries of despair above the graves of the dead, that would give terrible meaning to the weeds that are now so formally worn, and make all Christen-

dom but a chamber of anguish, or an abode of the insane.

And what is thus true in respect to the needs of the bereaved, or the burdened, is true of everything concerning which we need encouragement, or consolation. Amidst the errors and sins of the world,—amidst its wars, and oppressions, and varied wrongs,—amidst its hard questions, and unresolved mysteries,—as we toil for the correction of evil, for the enlightenment of the ignorant, for the recovery of the fallen, and for the attraction of souls to Christ, as well as in the chambers of the sick, and above the graves of the dead, and under our burdens of pain, or poverty, or care, we need that to animate and satisfy us, which nothing in the prevalent creeds of the Church can possibly impart. Satisfied! Who was ever *satisfied* in the belief of what the Church so pretentiously miscalls "evangelical truth?" Who ever found it a sufficient answer to a single question of life, or a single need of the heart? Who ever found it an occasion of hope amidst difficulties, or an inspiration to the most earnest and confident Christian labor? There have been those, we know, believing this theology, who have dwelt near to God,—who have found Jesus precious,—who have been sustained in trial,—and who have labored earnestly for Christian ends. But who have ever done so, without so far forgetting what is most characteristic and peculiar in their theology? or, who of them have been able to say, that they found in *it* all the help, satisfaction, or encouragement they desired? Who, especially, except in a fiendish mood, was ever

satisfied to look upon the Future this theology opens, and to think of *any* soul as endlessly miserable, or as blotted out of being? I once heard a minister thank God that He had made a hell for the wicked; but I never yet have heard—I do not think you ever yet have heard, one pray that a single soul might be damned, or annihilated. No! Convert the nations, O Lord: subdue the stubborn: call back the wandering: bring all home to Thyself: let not one be lost—*not one*:—this is the instinctive and persistent prayer of all hearts,—the more earnest, the more any heart is moved by the spirit of Christ; and no one can ever be *satisfied* with anything less.

What, then, is the result? That Universalism and *its* doctrine of the Future can alone answer the needs of souls, or satisfy them with the rest and perfect peace promised in Christ. Universalism alone writes words of cheer in every sick-room, and above every dying couch. Universalism alone illumines every dark hour with the light of God's purpose of good, and shows all mysteries resolved,—all questions answered,—all occasions of anxiety removed, in the sublime solutions of eternity, as all pain, and sorrow, and sin are made to result in good, and all souls are brought home. Universalism alone, therefore, has relief for every perplexity,—hope triumphing over all despondency, and encouragement to work, however labor may seem to be spent to no purpose, and seed to be sown only to die in the ground. As was said in our last discourse, no seed of truth, *this* tells us, can ever die;—no labor of love be expended for naught. As

Whittier, catching its spirit, has said, "In the economy of God, no effort, however small, put forth for a right cause, shall fail of its effect; no voice, however feeble, lifted up for truth, ever dies amidst the confused voices of time; but through discords of sin and sorrow, pain and wrong, it rises a deathless melody to blend with *the great harmony of a reconciled universe;*"—or, as he has expressed it even better in his verse—

> "I have not seen, I may not see
> My hopes for man take form in fact;
> But God will give the victory
> In due time; in this faith I act:
> *And he who sees the Future sure,*
> *The baffling Present may endure,*
> And bless, meanwhile, the Unseen Hand that leads
> The heart's desires beyond the halting step of deeds."

Can there be any doubt, then, on which side of this controversy about the Future and its results, the practical advantage belongs in this particular? *The soul is led to God in proportion as it feels that all its wants are supplied in Him, and in the truth He has given;* and, as I said in the outset of our present proposition, *it is encouraged to work in His behalf, in proportion as it sees that its work shall not be in vain.* "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" triumphantly exclaimed Paul, writing of the resurrection and mediatorial work of Christ. "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Is it not easy to see the exult-

ant satisfaction which thus kindled his soul to the shout of victory, and in which he so threw himself in thanksgiving upon the breast of God, rejoicing that there was nothing more for him to desire? It was but the natural culmination of the great argument he had been conducting, showing all enemies subdued,—death destroyed,—the victory of Christ complete, and God "all in all." Well might his heart overflow and rush to God in thanksgiving at *such* an issue. What else but this could have so filled up the measure of his desires? And when, according to his wont, he immediately gave a practical application of the truth he had thus expounded, and summoned the Corinthians to Christian diligence and fidelity, do you remember on what ground he based his exhortation? This was it:—"*Therefore*, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, *forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" On what other ground could he have urged them to such persistence and fidelity? Can we conceive of him as urging such an exhortation, if he had believed that not only his own labors and the labors of his co-workers, but the toils and sacrifices of Christ himself, were to prove "in vain" for the salvation of myriads of souls, and therefore "in vain" to secure any such result as the largeness of his language described?

No, my friends,—*no*. Paul was a Universalist, and filled and satisfied with the prospect which he thus saw before him, he was quickened himself, and sought to quicken others, to self-denying toil for Christ's sake, by

the encouragements thus supplied. Universalism alone can be harmonized with the grand flow of his thought and words, in this exhaustive treatise upon the resurrection and mediatoral reign of Christ; and Universalism alone could have furnished the inspiration for this assurance, that no labor in the Lord can be "in vain." What, indeed, save this conviction, could have sustained Christ amidst his self-denials and sufferings? But looking forward to the time when he should see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, he wrought on, till he had drained his bitter cup to its dregs. What, but this conviction, could have animated Paul and his fellow-laborers amidst their hardships and martyrdoms? But catching visions of "the end," and thus certified that not a hardship they endured, not a sacrifice they made, not a word they spake, should be "in vain," they gave themselves to their work, undiscouraged to the last. And only as we catch the inspiration of this faith of the Master and the apostles, and see the Grand Results in which all our efforts and all the toils of martyrs and apostles, and all the sufferings of our Lord, are to eventuate, can we find our hearts visited with the sweetest peace, — our souls made strongest for battle with temptation,—our lives most enriched with the "joy unspeakable,"—or our hands nerved for the most diligent moral and spiritual toil, and ourselves encouraged to be earnest, devoted, persistent, "always abounding in the work of the Lord."

I will not detain you further. Enough, I think, has been said to establish our position—that *our* doctrine of the Future has a Practical Power which none other

can claim. In this doctrine, then, will you not all believe?—and, believing it, will we not all unite in the purpose to demonstrate its efficient practical force?

A great thought is this thought of our Immortality!—this thought that we can never die,—that we are to live on, and on, as long as God himself lives, knowing more, loving more, and being more, forever! A great Hope, sublimest of all hopes that the human heart can cherish, is this hope of ultimate universal Order, Holiness, and Joy! No low estimate of souls or of life,—no narrow moulds or mere earthly standards of character,—nothing but the noblest aims, the most reverent self-respect, the broadest sympathies, the most resolute and aspiring virtue, and the most diligent Christian work, can be in keeping with truths like these. Into such aims and such self-respect, into such sympathies, and such a virtue, and such work, then, let *us* be uplifted and inspired, as we believe:—and with a Future so satisfying and so glorious opening before us, let us so far catch its spirit, and anticipate its life and purity, that, day by day, the Present, for each one of us, shall be full of its power, illumined with its light, sanctified in its holiness, and blessed in its joy.

XII.

Universalism as a Life.

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."—Eccl. xii. 13.

We have, at length, reached the last of this series of Discourses. The work has been a pleasant one to me. I trust it has not been uninteresting, or unprofitable, to you. If there is any reality in Christianity, and all that we call Religion is not an empty pretence, the ground over which we have passed, and the themes we have discussed, must be pronounced the most important that can engage human attention. Directly, or indirectly, almost every important point of Christian Doctrine, including all that most deeply concerns our relations, duty, and destiny, as spiritual and immortal beings, has been brought to our notice. Our special purpose has been to show the Practical Superiority of Universalism; but, to do this, it has been necessary to exhibit the prevalent doctrines in contrast with ours, and we have thus had the opportunity to compare the two types of thought, in respect to all the fundamental truths of the Gospel, as to their reasonableness, consistency, and harmony with common sense, as well as to their practical power.

In thus dealing with the prevalent doctrines, it has been my purpose, in every instance, to do by others as

we would that they should do by us. We almost *never* have our positions as Universalists correctly stated by our friends, who controvert them. Their statements are caricatures, rather than statements of real opinions. Arguments against us, therefore, are usually arguments against a man of straw. I have tried to avoid a like method of dealing with the doctrines we oppose, and to give them the best and most forcible statements possible—not only, and chiefly, as a matter of justice, but assured that the more exactly these doctrines are stated, the greater the advantage of Universalism in the argument.

In connection with all these doctrines, indeed, there are ideas, or qualifications, entertained, compelled by the ripening religious thought, or softening religious sentiment, of the age, of which one combating the doctrines, or stating their logical results, as the creed defines them, cannot, in justice, be expected to take account—partly, because not fully acquainted with all the ingenious devices and subtle distinctions, by which those who hold these doctrines try to relieve their harsh outlines, or to escape their consequences; but, mainly, because these ideas or qualifications are only the outgrowth of more liberal and scriptural opinions grafted into the stock of the old creeds, without business or justification there. Our friends, while thinking they abominate Universalism, have not been impervious to the influences of our larger and more rational thought, and thus have "entertained angels unawares." There is a great deal of the leaven of this broader and better faith among the people, and in the churches.

Hence, when we quote the creeds, or the expositions of leading authorities, and deduce the logical results, we are not always sure of stating a doctrine acceptably to those who profess to hold it :—not because we have misstated the real doctrine, or the consequences legitimate and necessary from it, but simply because the doctrine is not consistently held by those who find fault with our statement, or has had some thought or principle of a riper faith attached to it in their minds.

The Present is emphatically a transition period in the history of Religious Thought. Opinions are constantly changing. New meanings are being put into old terms,—to use our Lord's figure, new wine into old bottles, to verify, by-and-by, his statement of the inevitable result. The puritanic creed is still sworn to in the theological schools, but with a license of interpretation that the fathers would have pronounced unpardonable heresy. John Calvin's name is associated with doctrines which he would have rejected with abhorrence. Were he to return, he would not know himself in the shape in which his friends now present him. More enlarged and liberal views are making their way into acceptance, sometimes crowding out the old ideas,—sometimes, strangely and incongruously enough, associating with them, fulfilling the old prophecy, that "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together." The consequence is, not a little confusion of thought among the professed adherents of the old theology, and a condition of opinion in which the doctrines of the creed assume as many shapes as Proteus.

Under such circumstances, of course, it would be an

endless labor, in dealing with so-called evangelical doctrines, to undertake to give all the modifications, qualifications, and explanations, which they receive. The most we can do, is to give the fairest possible statement of essential ideas or principles, as furnished in the creeds and authoritative expositions; and doing this, we are justified in holding the prevalent theology accountable for whatever logically follows. This is what I have aimed to do in these discourses; and I trust that in no instance have I failed in fairness, or candor, or given a representation which has, to the slightest extent, *mis*-represented the doctrine with which I have dealt. If I have, in any case, fallen into a misrepresentation, it has been purely unintentional. That I might the more certainly avoid doing so, whenever there has been any room for question, I have chosen, at the risk, sometimes, of wearying my audience, to allow our brethren to state their opinions for themselves, by citing their catechisms and acknowledged authorities.

To what effect these labors have been performed, it is for those who have heard to say. I am very far from supposing that I have done all that might have been done, in the treatment of the several topics. I have done what I could. Some, I hope, have been helped to a better understanding, alike of our own and of the prevalent doctrines, and so to clearer conceptions and more positive convictions; nor can I believe that any who have listened candidly, have failed to see new reasons for confidence in Universalism, as the truth of God, and for the assurance that, on every account,

theoretically and practically, the advantage is on its side.

These things being said by way of general review, we come now to the topic which has seemed to me a fitting one for the close of our work:—*Universalism, considered in contrast with the Prevalent Theology, as a Life.*

Unless I have altogether failed of my purpose, no one who has heard these discourses can have helped seeing the wide contrast, practically, between the several Universalist doctrines, on the one hand, and the so-called evangelical dogmas, on the other, individually considered. No candid listener, therefore, I am sure, can be unprepared to confess it the weakness and fatal condemnation of these last named dogmas, that they are not only so lacking in correct moral principles, but are so positively pernicious in their practical operation.

This is a view of the subject, that has not heretofore been sufficiently insisted upon; and it is time that it should be properly enforced on the attention of the people. As Universalists, our faith has been assailed with the grossest accusations of "licentiousness," and "immorality;" and, hitherto, we have, mainly, been content to stand on the defensive, satisfied to deny that our doctrine is immoral, and to charge that the doctrines we reject are false. The time has fully come for us to assume the offensive, and to "carry the war into Africa." In no spirit of retaliation, but in justice to the truth, we are summoned not only to arraign the

popular errors of the Church as *Doctrines*, but to charge them with the inefficiency and demoralizing influence which belong to them as *Moral Principles*. The Jews raised the outcry that Christ was a sinner, when it was they who were the sinners; and so, these many years, so-called evangelical Christianity has been assailing Universalism with the charge of moral inefficiency and license, when, in fact, it is against itself that the charge should be made.

As a theory, this prevalent interpretation of Christianity is open to the most serious objection, and ought to be rejected and abhorred. I do not forget that great men, and learned men, and good men have believed it, and still do believe and defend it; nor would I intentionally use language concerning it to wound the feelings of any one, or that can even seem to hold the intelligence, or the Christian character, of its believers in light esteem. I honor the learning of its learned advocates. I freely admit that there are no persons more intelligent than are to be found among its professed adherents. I have no reluctance to confess that some of the sweetest and purest souls that have ever blessed the world with a good life, have been reckoned among its believers — as they are to be reckoned among those harrowed and tormented by it. But tradition and the force of habit and education are sufficient to explain, why its great men and its learned men are not wiser, and why it is still believed by intelligent, thoughtful, and Christian minds. I have no doubt that there were intelligent, thoughtful, and entirely sincere persons, who, owing to the same general

causes, clung to Judaism and rejected Christ. Were they any the less certainly mistaken, because they were intelligent, thoughtful, and sincere?

While, therefore, I freely grant all that any one can be disposed justly to claim as to the intelligence and character of its believers, I repeat, that, if there were nothing else, this prevalent theology ought to be rejected and abhorred for what it is, *as a theory*. It confounds and insults reason. It contradicts nature. It outrages every unperverted moral instinct. Wrenching all our ideas of what is consistent and just, ascribing to God conduct that would make any man infamous, and darkening the universe with the shadow of endless sin and suffering, it compels the confession—a confession made by no less a person than the acute and distinguished Princeton theologian, Dr. Hodge—that the system is "*not a system of common sense*, but of profound and awful mystery." Nor is this all. Says Albert Barnes, speaking of this theory, "When I look on a world of sinners and of sufferers,—upon death beds and grave yards,—upon the world of woe, filled with hosts to suffer forever; when I see my friends, my parents, my family, my people, my fellow-citizens—when I look upon a whole race involved in this sin and danger, . . . I am struck dumb. *It is all dark, dark, dark to my soul, and I cannot disguise it.*"

Universalists are often charged with saying harsh things concerning this theology; but, considering who it is that speak, the very Gamaliels of the creed, what Universalist ever said things half so hard about it as this statement of Dr. Hodge, that "it is *not a system*

of common sense, but of awful mystery," or this declaration of Mr. Barnes, that it makes the universe utterly dark to its believer's eyes? What *can* be said of any theory, *as a theory*, worse than *this?*

But, objectionable as this theology thus is, *as a theory*, the great objection to it is not theoretical, but practical; and the thing that needs most to arrest attention, and that should be most effectual to secure its rejection and abhorrence by all who desire the world's growth in goodness, is the fact that it is so unfavorable to Christian culture, and, in the case of a large class of minds, so pernicious and grossly immoral in its tendency. *Not one principle*—I make the remark deliberately, intending all that the words convey, and appealing to the preceding discourses for its justification—*not one fundamental principle does this theology furnish*, which can be reconciled with the character of Christ, or that you, or I, could thoroughly adopt as a principle of action, without incurring the condemnation and odium of the civilized world. And, asking you to pardon any seeming severity in my language, I confess to you, my friends, that, when I think of the principles which have thus been insisted upon as the vital principles of our Religion,—when I consider the doctrines that have been taught, and the spirit that has been not only diffused, but cultivated, and the motives with which men have been plied in the name of Christianity, I do not wonder that the tone of life in Christendom has been so much below the tone of the New Testament; that morality and religion, that piety and charity have so often been divorced; that to be a

Christian professedly, has so often been to be something quite different from a genial, generous, just, and loving man or woman; that religion has been so neglected, and sense and the world so served; and, especially, that dungeons have been filled, and limbs loaded with chains, and martyr-flames kindled, and racks and tortures put into requisition, and rivers of blood made to redden the earth, all for the glory of God and the good of the Church. I only wonder that Christendom has shown us the fruits of good it has. Those by whom Christianity has been thus dishonored, have only shown us the legitimate results of the lessons they have learned, or have only acted consistently with the principles of their faith. It was a cruel, but no less an exact and legitimate logic, when Queen Mary, of England, said that God would burn heretics forever in the world to come, and it must be pleasing to Him if she burned them here. And considering the doctrines he taught, nothing could have been more consistent than Calvin's conduct when he burned Servetus. The body of his victim would consume; but to make his sufferings as protracted, and thus to be as much like his God as possible, he made the fire of green fagots!

As I have had occasion to ask several times before, I beg that you will not suspect me of finding any pleasure in saying these things. I say them only because justice to the subject demands, and because it is required to indicate to you my sense of what the prevalent theology is *intrinsically, as a life*. Do not suspect me, either, of overlooking the great amount of Christian life and character which has been exhibited, not-

withstanding the prevalence of principles so monstrous. I thank God that Christian civilization can boast of so much in this respect: and as I do so, I reverence, more than ever, the silent and unsuspected power of Christ's character, which, interfusing itself even with the worst opinions, has been able so to counteract the influence of false interpretations of his truth; and I glory more than ever in that Human Nature, which, spite of the iron-bands of creeds, and the withering force of error, and the studied infusion of malignant principles under the name of religion, has had native energy and goodness enough to grow into such a stout and healthy stock of virtue, to blossom into such a fragrant piety, and to bear fruit in sympathies and philanthropies so broad and beautiful. Error has, on these accounts, to a great extent, been neutralized.

Well, indeed, did Dr. Channing say: "Nothing would be more unjust, than to decide on men's characters from their peculiarities of faith. A great truth may be completely neutralized by the countless impressions and excitements which the mind receives from other sources; and so a great error may be disarmed of much of its power by the superior energy of other and better views, and of virtuous examples. The creed of habit, imitation, or fear, may be defended stoutly, and yet, fortunately, have little practical influence. The mind, when compelled by education, or other circumstances, to receive irrational doctrines, has yet a power often of keeping them, as it were, on its surface, and of refusing to incorporate them with its own being; and when burdened with an incongruous or per-

nicious system, it often discovers a sagacity which reminds us of the instinct of inferior animals, in selecting only what is healthful for its daily food. Accordingly, one's real faith often corresponds little with that which is professed; and opinions central in the creed are thrown outward, and so fail to become principles of action, while, through habit, they are still defended as articles of faith. Hence, the prevalent theology has not always been as pernicious in its actual results as we might have expected :—a fact we most joyfully admit. It has been counteracted by nature, reason, and common sense; by the general strain of Scripture; by the mild example and precepts of Christ, and by the many positive declarations of God's perfect equity and universal love. Still, enough of mischief has been done to show the *tendency* of the system, and its perverting and poisonous power in life. The fundamental principles of morality have been shocked. A gloomy and servile religion has been formed, by the exhibition of a severe and partial Deity. The timid have been discouraged. Excuses have been given to the bad. Vanity and bigotry have been fed. Shelter and justification have been offered to the malignant and partial."* All moral estimates have been vitiated. Religious education has, too widely, degenerated into a systematic perversion. The Christian life has been made a mercenary service, rather than a filial offering. Form has been substituted for substance, and a cold, or pretentious, or cruel

* I credit all thus marked as quoted, to Dr. Channing, because the thought is his. The language is somewhat changed and amplified. I cannot now localize the extract, my notes being lost.

pietism, for the love of man and the love of God :—and long will it be, ere the work for evil which has thus *been*, and is still *being* done, shall be wholly overcome.

But, turning now to Universalism, how great is the contrast, in all these respects! *It is the chief glory of Universalism, that it can be lived.* It is beautiful and precious *as a theory*, satisfying the reason and the heart, and illuminating life and the universe, as no other doctrine or philosophy can. The strongest words are poor to tell its worth, even in this respect. I quoted, just now, Albert Barnes' sad confession of the darkness, in which he finds himself enveloped by his faith. The theory of Universalism saves us from any such experience. There is no cloud within which it does not reveal a "silver lining;"—no mystery that it does not interpret;—no need to which it does not minister;—no prayer that it does not answer. In its light, everything that seems dark or severe takes on an aspect of good. Sorrow is transfigured into a messenger of mercy. Punishment becomes the corrective infliction of a kind Father's hand. Death-beds and graveyards are relieved of their gloom. Even sin—the darkest and most fearful thing in the universe, is shown to be within the control of God, and destined, before the power of Christ and the Cross, to disappear:—while every lovely thing becomes more lovely, the heavens brighter, the earth greener, home dearer, friendship sweeter, time richer as a season of education, and eternity unspeakably glorious in the ripened plans of God's wisdom, and the triumphs of His grace. "Since I have known Christ," once said a great historian, "every thing

is clear to me;"—and since I have known Universalism, many an emancipated soul, educated in the popular creeds, has said—often with eyes running over with grateful tears,—everything has grown beautiful to me;—not only is the Bible a new book, but I find myself walking in a new world. There are those here, this afternoon, who, with choked and weeping utterance,—choked and weeping in the fullness of their joy—have told me this as their experience; and, God be thanked, there are hundreds and thousands of souls, emancipated into the light and peace of this faith, who are giving the same testimony. Nor can we be surprised at this. Rather, studying this faith and seeing not only its evidences and its contrasts with the common creeds, but its harmonies, its assurances, and the light of God in which it enables us to see light, we can only wonder that more are not attracted to it, and thus affected by it, and the firmer becomes our conviction of its truth, as we see increased reason to exclaim with Paul, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

But while all this is to be said of Universalism *as a theory*, it is not in this that its highest commendation is to be found. Life is our great concern. What we *are*, is of higher moment than how we *feel*. As I just now said, therefore, it is the chief glory of Universalism, that it can be lived;—that it is so abounding in principles and appeals fitted to rectify and sanctify character, teaching nothing that cannot be made a rule of action, or that fails, when appreciated, to be an efficient element of moral power: and—please mark and

ponder the statement—*it is only as we act upon the principles and from the motives thus supplied, and only thus warranted, that our virtue becomes genuine, or our Christian character such as God, or good men, can approve.*

Did you ever reflect what Universalism fully translated and crystalized into a Life would be? Think of it. There, first of all, would be a consciousness of what the soul is as the child of God, made for a destiny of immortal purity—insuring self-respect, self-denial, and all personal virtue. There would be a consciousness of the brotherhood of souls—of all souls, and fidelity to it,—insuring justice, charity, a loving, forbearing, and forgiving spirit, and all social excellence. There would be an abhorrence and loathing of sin, as, in itself, a dishonor and an evil; and a love and choice of righteousness, as the intrinsic good. There would be faith in Christ, leading the soul to him in a sense of needs which he only can supply, melting it into contrition and consecration in presence of his life and cross, and binding it indissolubly to his service. And over all, and under all, and transfusing all, there would be a sense of God and of filial relations to Him, flowering into all pious and beautiful affections towards Him, and making life patient and serene, through trust in Him,—cheerful and hopeful, through the encouragements of His love,—aspiring, in the endeavor to get nearer to Him, and fragrant and holy, as a daily offering to His praise.

Nor, fortunately, are we left to imagine what Universalism, thus expressed in life, would be. We all

love to look at Christ—so pure; so patient; so full of a tender and child-like loyalty to God, and of love and pity for man; tempted, but sinless; tried, suffering, but uncomplaining; the impersonation of all moral and spiritual excellence. Refreshing it is, in this evil world, to be conscious that such a soul has really lived in it; and of us all, there is not one—not one even of the most heedless and indifferent, who, in the hour of serious thought, does not feel that *that* only, next to God, is the character which is worthy of imitation, and that there is nothing so desirable as that all life should be shaped after its model. And yet, look you, any of you, at this character of Christ, analyze it to its principles,—trace its virtues to their roots, and then tell me what it is, but the flower and fruit, the incarnation of the spirit and principles of Universalism? In all his meekness and gentleness; in all his trustfulness and submission; in all his tender sympathies for man; in all his readiness to forgive; in all his devotion to God, and all his heroic fidelity to duty; in all that assemblage of qualities and graces which made him the unapproached and perfect man he was, find, if you can, one principle acted upon,—one doctrine illustrated,—one motive responded to, which Universalism does not alone supply and enforce, and fidelity to which it does not foster, so far as the believer yields himself to its power.

Take his forgiveness of enemies, as an example. You all know how marked and beautiful a trait this was in his character, and how that prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," ex-

haled with his expiring breath, touches all hearts, and completes the seal of his divinity. And yet, what is this but an exhibition in which, as the image of God, he illustrates what Universalism alone affirms as to the Father's love and care, even for the most guilty, and what can be justified only on the ground that Universalism is true? Actuated by any other than the principle we thus affirm as a fact in the Divine Government,—actuated, especially, by any such principle as the prevalent theology affirms with respect to God and His relations to sinners, would he—*could* he have prayed that prayer for his murderers? Never. It was the spirit of our faith that yearned in him, in that hour of agony, and that even the scoffs and mockeries of his tormentors, added to his anguish, could not destroy. It is Universalism that beams from that upturned face,—that speaks from those parched lips, and that makes that last scene so touching in its pathos,—so sublime in its moral beauty,—so effective in its moral power.

And so I might show of every other trait in our Lord's character. Some, who do not know what Universalism is, would think me presumptuous,—some even blasphemous, in thus claiming Christ as its representative. And yet, I am only claiming what no candid and thoughtful mind, who will trace actions to their motives, and resolve life into its principles, can fail to confess; and for one, I shall be ready to renounce Universalism, whenever it can be shown that it is not represented in Christ, or that anything but its principles can claim him as their expression.

It was once said by an opponent of Universalism,* that it has no oaths of its own; that the worst, one actuated by its spirit can say to another, is, God bless you; and that Universalists, when they curse or swear, are obliged to steal their neighbors' oaths wherewith to do it. This was meant for ridicule; but the man could not have pronounced a nobler eulogy. It is even as he said; and the fact that it is so, is only one of the evidences which proclaim this doctrine to be his who said, "Swear not at all;" "love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Think what life would have been in the past, had this faith moulded and inspired it, and what it would be now, if it could be thus mellowed and sanctified!

My friends, there are many sources of evidence, by which I am assured of the truth of Universalism. I look abroad upon the works of God;—up to the sun and stars, and out upon the showers, that proclaim His impartial love, and over all that tells of His wise and beneficent power;—I look into the Bible, and read the words of prophets and apostles, and of the anointed Son of God;—I look down into my own soul;—I read History, and study the unfoldings of Providence;—and everywhere, I think I find unmistakable witness of this faith. But all this would be in vain to assure me

* Rev. Mr. McClure: Lectures against Universalism.

of its truth, if the faith itself were unsuited to life, or destitute of moral power. God's great purpose is to train souls into nearness to Himself, and Christ came only to save from sin, and help us into holiness; and though this faith were written upon the sky, or proclaimed by an angel from heaven, if it were plainly unfitted or unable to do *this* work, I should know that it could not be the truth that God and Christ would have me believe.

It is, for one reason, on this account, that I am so positive that the prevalent theology is not the Gospel of Christ. As we have seen, *it cannot be lived.* Christ did not live it. No single principle that it affirms as peculiar to it, can be found embodied or authorized in him. No good man or woman, living to God's acceptance, ever lived it. Only Universalism can be lived. No matter, my unbelieving brother or sister, what you may say against Universalism. No matter how firm may be your conviction that *it* is false, and that what is called evangelical theology is true. So far as you are a good man or woman, living a Christian life, you are living upon the principles of Universalism, and practically repudiating those of the creed you profess. And, speaking for myself, it is only when I consider the significance of this fact, that I am most certain that the common theology is false; and only when, as I look into this faith of ours, I see its fitness and power, rightly appreciated, to do God's moral work, and perceive how clearly all good lives are its expression, does my confidence in it become most assured and complete. With this evidence before me, every other witness—the wit-

ness of creation, of History, of Providence, of my own soul, and of this Book of Books—is confirmed; and I feel that, whatever may oppose, whoever may reject, denounce, or gainsay, I am warranted in the conviction that I cannot be mistaken, and that I may, without presumption, fold this Gospel, with all its precious hopes and consolations, to my heart, and say, *I know it is true.*

Only in this conviction—only for the ends thus indicated, do I preach it. I have no fondness—and what I say for myself, I might say for my brethren with whom it is my privilege to be associated in this ministry of a universal Gospel—I have no fondness for the position of antagonism in which I thus find myself, as related to the great mass of the Christian world. I have no love for the name, or the ban, of a heretic. I do not preach Universalism for money. As little do I preach it for popularity, or for any worldly or selfish object. I could get more money, and secure more popular favor, preaching something else. But, as was substantially said in our first discourse, I believe Universalism to be God's truth,—the power by which Christ is to redeem the world. All around me, I see souls hungering and pining for it, and the world, in all its most vital interests, suffering for it;—and I preach it, to enlighten the ignorant; to bind up the broken-hearted; to encourage the desponding; to lead souls out into its large and glorious light; but, above all, that it may be to those to whom I preach, the power of God unto salvation, inspiring them to a devout and consecrated Christian life. Not for a moment would I preach it, except for this final purpose.

And thus preaching it, I am free to confess that I know of no fact so melancholy in connection with it, as the failure of so many who profess it to appreciate its meaning and its claims, and to act in the illustration of its principles and the demonstration of its power. It is a sad thing to me, to see indifference and irreligion,—to see a low tone and type of life,—to see careless and prayerless fathers and mothers,—to see young men and young women with no love for the Saviour, with no interest in the Church, with no elevating and consecrating Christian aims, among any who call themselves Christians. But, saddest of all, it is to me, to see these things among those who profess to be Universalists ;—saddest of all, because they sin against larger light,—against nobler principles,—against a better and more precious Gospel, and so trifle with higher motives and obligations, and endanger more vital interests. It is painful to see a mother abused by any one, but most painful to see her dishonored and abused by her own children. That those who are ignorant of Universalism should despise and reject it, as Christ was despised and rejected of the Jews, is to be expected. That they should say hard things of it, and of us, without cause, should occasion us no anxiety and no surprise. But that those who profess to be its believers and its friends, should be insensible of its worth,—irresponsive to its appeals, and false to its obligations,—so giving the whole force of their lives to discredit, perhaps to dishonor it,—this *may* surprise us, and *should* occasion us anxiety.

Am I speaking to one—young or old, man or woman,

who is thus giving occasion for surprise and anxiety to those who love Universalism? How can I better say the final words of this series of labors to expound and defend it, than by pointing you, in the light of what has now been said, to what your life, as an expression of Universalism, should be, and by pressing upon you this question: *Is it what it ought to be?*

Doubtless, I am addressing some who do not yet believe Universalism—among them, possibly, some who have listened to all these discourses; and speaking to them, my last word, in this attempt to enlighten and convince them, is, Be entreated to weigh candidly what you have heard; consider your own needs, and the numerous evidences by which this faith of ours is demonstrated to be the Divine ministry to them; ask yourselves what other interpretation of the Gospel can fulfill Christ's promise of satisfaction, or most glorify God, or most honor the Saviour; and, especially, ask yourselves what other form of faith furnishes so much to quicken and help you to the life, to which, as Christian men and women, you should aspire. I should not care to convince any one of you, merely intellectually, of the truth of Universalism. We have enough *such* believers in Universalism already—more than is to its credit, or for the world's good. I count a *mere* intellectual assent to any Christian truth as of small importance. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;" and no minister does his real work except as he preaches so as to kindle the affections, and quicken the conscience, and Christianize the life, through an enlightenment of the understanding of

his hearers,—building up the kingdom of God as a power in their souls. Only for this purpose, therefore, and as a means of consecrating them more perfectly to God, in a holy life, do I care to convert men and women to Universalism, or to see them converted by others. Head-faith and word-professions are cheap. What souls need, is the life of God in them; and what the Church and the world need, are men and women with the life of God flowing electrically out of them, living and working as the redeemed of Christ, for the redemption of others. *Such* converts to Universalism, I am glad to be instrumental in making; and, could I know that I had been able, by these discourses, thus to lead even one soul nearer to God, in the love of the Saviour, through an enlargement of faith, I should be more than compensated for all my labor. If not now, I trust some of you may yet be thus helped to higher attainments in the Christian life, through what you have here heard.

But my chief anxiety, in speaking these closing words, I am frank to say, is, as to the effect of these discourses upon you, who call yourselves Universalists; and what I want to do, more than anything else,—even though I must do it at the risk of repeating what has been said in the practical enforcement of our several doctrines, as the discourses have proceeded,—is, if possible, to arouse you, my brothers and sisters, professing with me to rejoice in this Great Hope, to feel the importance of your position as those charged with such a trust. You *say* you believe Universalism; and doubtless you do: but, *What are you doing for it?*

and what is the judgment concerning it as a Practical Power, which you are helping by your lives to create or confirm? *Were the world's verdict on this point dependent on the measure of your love for God, and your zeal for Christ, and your religious life and work—what would it be?* Are you *talking* as if Universalism were the truth, and *living* as if it were a lie? Are you arguing as if it were precious, and treating it, by your neglect, by your lukewarmness, by your parsimony, as if it were worthless?

The leaven of Universalism is fast extending into churches of other names, and its ideas and conclusions are accepted by multitudes, who have never moved except in so-called evangelical associations, and who, under the force of habit and social ties, will always remain there. This is to be regretted, since Universalism fails to be thus numerically represented according to the facts, and fails to secure the advantages of wealth, and position, and often even of high moral influence, to which it is fairly entitled. But there is something much worse than this. There are far too many so-called Universalists, who, from indifference, or for the sake of fashion, or popularity, or some such inexcusable or utterly contemptible motive, are regularly attending at other churches, and paying for the support and spread of another Gospel. And worse even than this—there are too many such who attend no church, except as they occasionally somewhere steal a sermon. They talk Universalism, and if they are sick, or any members of their families die, feel that they have a perfect right to claim the service of some Uni-

versalist minister, but never lift a finger, and seldom contribute a mill, for the advancement of what they profess. Both these classes are utterly oblivious to their obligations to live, and pay, and work, according to their ability, for what they believe to be the truth. However they may have some idea of what Universalism is theoretically, they know absolutely nothing of it morally or spiritually.

Are *you* such a Universalist? If you are, you should understand that you have no right to the name, and that, talking about Universalism, and thus proving traitorous to it, you are not only acting to your own shame, but are doing more to injure and dishonor our Gospel than hundreds of those who do not believe it, and who are reviling and opposing it. If I am speaking to a single individual, whom truth would compel to confess that he or she is *such* an one, let me say to you, For your own sake and the truth's sake, cease to be such, and, realizing what this Gospel of ours is, and what are its claims, and what it would do in its believer, be found henceforth where you belong —among those associated in the name of Universalism, doing Universalist work, and helping to make Universalism a power in the world. Or, if you are not man or woman enough to do this, at least, in mercy to the truth you are wounding and discrediting, cease to talk Universalism, and to call yourself a Universalist. I care not who you are. It matters not to me how high your position, or how respectable your outside morality. You are false to one of the most sacred duties that can press on a human conscience—and the

more you have, or the more you are, the greater is the baseness of your sin. You are "crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting him to an open shame." Talk not to me of your faith in Christ. Tell me not that you believe in Universalism. Understand that faith in Christ includes integrity to Christian convictions. Understand that Universalism is a positive thing, imposing positive obligations, and that no person has a right to assume its name, or advocate its doctrines, until he or she is ready to confess these obligations, and, as far as possible, to live in their practical fullfilment.

And turning now, finally, to you, who are members of this, or some other Universalist congregation, giving your money, and, more or less perfectly, your influence, for the support and spread of Universalism, let me entreat you to understand and to feel the force of what has been said in these sermons, and the imperative nature of the duties thus shown to be incumbent upon you. There are few who consider the fact; but there is no such precious trust given to human hands, as is committed to us in this faith that we call Universalism: and there are no more solemn responsibilities than those which press upon us as the bearers of its name, summoned to represent its type of spiritual culture, and carrying its banner amidst a gainsaying world. If the world is to be regenerated, here, in this truth of ours, so sure as there is any truth, is the power most effectual for its regeneration. If there is to dawn a new day, of broader light,—of higher ideals,—of more generous charities,—of a more per-

fect religious life, here is the sun that is to diffuse its beams, and usher in this new day. If we are ourselves to be soldiers in the army of the Captain of our salvation, and our race is to be mustered into his service, here is the banner around which, sooner or later, the rally is to be witnessed, and under which the march is to be made :—and glorious are the visions which rise before me, of the time when this faith of ours shall thus have mastered souls, and leavened society ; when, illuminating Christendom with its light, and distilling its peace into all perplexed and troubled hearts, it shall, also, have expressed itself in laws, vitalized reform, and broadened charity ;—when homes shall be pervaded by its spirit, and children shall be educated in its love and service ; and when it shall be exhibited in a style of character corresponding to itself, and fill the whole field of its prevalence with its own appropriate fruits.

Such a time is coming, as surely as there is any meaning in the Cross, or any truth in the Gospel. Do we believe this ? Do *you* believe it, my brother or sister ? If you do *not*, you are no Universalist. If you *do*, consider, I pray you, what are your obligations to the truth you represent, and on which so much depends. The soldiers of Napoleon counted it a great thing to carry his eagles :—shall not we count it a greater thing to be the standard-bearers of the Lord ? It is much to march under our sacred flag of stars, in the name of Freedom and our imperilled Republic :—how much more to be the servants and soldiers of the world's Redeemer, — agents, under him, in its regeneration !

How, then, henceforth, will you live,—how will you work, in the discharge of these obligations? Do you believe that Universalism has the Practical Superiority which I have here been arguing? Do you believe that it is, as a Life, what I have in this discourse set forth? If you do, the world has a right to demand that you verify this superiority in your own characters. How is the world to be redeemed, except as those who have the truth are faithful to it? How can you expect that others will believe, if you do not show that you believe, yourselves? How can you ask your neighbors to accept Universalism as a ministry of quickening religious power—as an inspiration to a higher order of religious life, if they can point to you to prove that it is not? In other words, how can you expect that others will honor what you discredit, or rally around our banner, if you trail it in the dust?

Think of these things, I entreat you; and, by all that our faith furnishes to move and inspire you, resolve, God helping you, that nothing in your example shall suggest to any inquiring soul a suspicion of the religious efficacy of the Gospel you profess. Remember that there is no argument like the demonstration of a holy life; and resolve that your prayerfulness,—your love of the Bible, and of the Sabbath, and of the Sanctuary,—your interest in the Sunday School and the Church,—your sympathy with the oppressed and the poor,—your integrity, generosity, and humanity, flavored and sanctified, all of them, by your reverence and piety towards God, shall consistently attest what it is to be a man, or a woman, rounded and matured

in the incarnation of Universalist principles, and thus fitly embodying UNIVERSALISM AS A LIFE. Oh, for the time when Universalists shall themselves understand Universalism, and be thus faithful to it—seeing that it is not enough for us to live as well as those of narrower faith, of dimmer light, of lower principles! Oh, for the time when all who bear our name shall see what are our moral standards, and that there is a Universalist type of character to which we should seek to conform, as far above the ordinary type of the Church as our faith is broader, better, and more inspiring! Then will hearts be melted, and souls aspire, and knees be bent at the Cross of Christ, and men and women grow ripe and fragrant in all the graces of the Christian life, as never before.

Let this time *now* begin with you. See and feel what Universalism is, and be true to it:—you, fathers and mothers, with the sacred cares, and some of you, perhaps, with the burdens of life, resting upon you;—you, young men and maidens, the objects of so many hopes, subject to so many exposures, charged with so many responsibilities for yourselves and others. Realize what is the work in which, as Universalists, you are summoned of God to take part,—what are the means of religious culture with which you are supplied,—what is the kind of life you are responsible to exhibit, and see to it that you are not false to your position, your privileges, or yourselves.

And now come, O thou Holy Spirit of Truth, breathe upon, and baptize all our hearts. Help us all, young, middle-aged, and old, so to gather up and act

upon all the high principles and inspiring motives with which we are furnished, that, honoring our faith, we may honor ourselves as the instruments of thy Great Purpose. Thus, rich in all the inward joys and outward graces of the Gospel, may we effectually contribute to lead souls into its light, and help on the time when UNIVERSALISM shall no longer be a disputed prophecy, or a debated hope, but a sublimely accomplished fact, in the complete destruction of Error and Sin, and the EVER-GROWING HOLINESS AND FELICITY OF ALL SOULS!

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